

THE

ORDEAL

OF

John Gyles

STUART TRUEMAN

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THE

ORDEAL

OF

John Gyles

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*Being an Account of his*

*Odd Adventures,*

*Strange Deliverances*

*&c.*

*as a Slave of the Maliseets*

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## FOREWORD

North America had a turbulent and eventful Wild East as well as a Wild West. Hordes of whooping Indian warriors from French Acadia overran New England settlements in pioneer days—shoot-ing, scalping, plundering, burning. Paint-smeared braves hatched down thousands of men, women, and children where they stood, or dragged them off into slavery in the northern wilds. Scores of tranquil white villages in Maine, New Hampshire and Massa-chusetts went up in roaring infernos of flame—often to be attacked again and put to the torch as fast as they were rebuilt.

These grisly forays were part of the French-English struggle for mastery of a new continent and its trade, a struggle that raged almost incessantly after the original King Philip's War, which was purely an English-Indian conflict, through King William's War, Queen Anne's War, Dummer's War, King George's War, to the French and Indian War, creating an era of unbridled savagery without precedent in the history of civilization.

For nearly a century New England farmers lived with guns in their hands, fearful that from any innocent shrub might come the shrill *zing* of a lethal arrow, from behind any rock might explode a puff of smoke heralding a thudding musket ball.

King Louis XIV of France, declaring war in support of the deposed King James II of England, had conceived a great cam-paign to drive the English out of North America. It was a rash ambition from the start, since there were only twelve thousand French colonists in Canada, whereas the English numbered more than two hundred and fifty thousand south of Maine's Penobscot River, with many more in Newfoundland, Hudson's Bay, and the prosperous colonies of Virginia and the Carolinas.

But to the King in Versailles, the vast distances of far-away North America—in the thousands of miles of forbidding wilder-ness, the complex problems of supply—looked insignificant on a table map. The King sent the able seventy year old strategist Count Frontenac back to Quebec as Governor of New France, charged with making the dream come true. French officers, who

led Indian war parties into New England and New York, resorted to guerilla raids partly because they had little choice; they lacked the manpower of the fast-expanding English colonies to the south. Many French officials must have realized that eventually, increasingly powerful English sea-borne forces would surge up and overwhelm the key strongholds of Louisbourg and Quebec.

Meanwhile they fought on with every resource at their command—chief of which was keeping the Indians fired with hate for the English. Zealous missionaries from France laboured among the Maliseets of the St. John River; the Micmacs of northern and eastern New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; the Passamaquoddies of the bay coast; the Penobscots of Maine, helping to hold fast their loyalty to the French cause. These Acadian tribes left a trail of charred, smouldering towns and mutilated corpses through New England. They also left their own uncounted dead littering the approaches to English forts.

For their part, English armed expeditions used the blood-thirsty Iroquois—mainly Mohawks from New York province—as auxiliaries. Disciplined, fanatical warriors, cannibalistic bogymen in eastern Indian lore, they struck terror into their enemies' hearts, a dread that has lingered even up to modern times.

The question of whether a seventeenth century pioneer thought that the French and their savages were needlessly cruel, or that the English and their savages were more barbarous, depended on which nationality he bore. Each regarded the other as the ruthless aggressor, each considered his own tactics justified in self-defence, and each could document a strong case to prove it.

To the French, it was intolerable that presumptuous English colonial officials, traders, and fishermen should openly defy Acadia's proclaimed boundaries, that English warships should bombard Acadian coastal ports and sack the countryside.

To the English, the ceaseless massacres of New England's townsfolk could not be endured forever. Retaliatory blows by sea only seemed to draw down more attacks. Year by year there was growing talk of a Grand Design. Sooner or later the source of the irritation—the Acadian heartland—would have to be scorched out like a wasps' nest.

In 1686, England and France had signed a treaty at Whitehall by which their New World colonies were to remain neutral and

at peace even when their mother countries were at war. But the news didn't seem to travel across the ocean. Ironically, the North American conflict went on even when England and France were at peace.

Very often greed, brutality or treachery of individuals provoked reprisals, which in turn incited counter-reprisals, in a vicious spiral in which humanity to the helpless became the last consideration. There were brave men and heroes on both sides—and scoundrels, and incompetents.

In 1689 a nine-year-old Puritan boy was captured by fierce Maliseet braves invading what is now Maine. He became a slave of the St. John River Indians—and one of the first English civilian residents of what is now the Province of New Brunswick.

This semi-fictional book is based on John Gyles' incredible adventures during the six years he spent with the Indians and the three years he lived with a French seigneur's family, as chronicled in his personal journal written in 1736. He was probably the first North American to understand all three elements—English, French and Indian—and to see things through their eyes.

Less is historically recorded about the early life and customs of the Maliseets—those master hunters and paddlers who roamed the mightiest river system on the Atlantic seaboard south of the St. Lawrence—than any other eastern tribe. What the pony was to the Indians of the Prairies, the birch-bark canoe was to the Maliseets. John Gyles' journal provides a priceless storehouse of first-hand observation.

## I

### THE SAVAGES ATTACK

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Among the many resolute Puritan families who left the religious persecution of seventeenth-century England for the freedom, space, and opportunity of the New World had been Thomas Gyles.

He settled with his family at a place on the Kennebec River which bore the disturbing name, Merrymeeting Bay. But Gyles, a strict Sabbatarian, found to his relief that it was a quiet, sober law-abiding and God-fearing place—until, returning from a trip home to England to settle the family estate on the death of his parents, he learned that the eastern Indians were on the warpath and posed a serious threat to Merrymeeting Bay. Wisely, Thomas Gyles moved to Long Island while the sanguinary struggle of 1675-76 known as King Philip's War devastated the once pleasant colonial countryside.

It was a hectic, ghastly, unpredictable war. It began with an ambush after which eight English heads were found impaled on roadside poles. It was a war between New England settlers and several tribes led by the proud Metacombet, chief of the Wampanoags or Pokonokets (better known as King Philip, from a name given him by a doting English godparent in happier days. His tribal seat was Mount Hope, now part of Bristol, R.I.)

This conflict was not the traditional picture of armies advancing on one another in open array—this was a thousand and one sudden, swift, terrible engagements: unsuspecting settlers shot dead in their rowboat as they bent to fix the oarlocks; a mortally wounded Indian toppling out of his canoe and overturning it, drowning his companions; English families surprised at daybreak and small children swung by the heels and dashed against the wall; New England cavalymen galloping after five limping

Indians, only to be ambushed by a hundred savages; a troop of cavalry racing to their rescue, only to be trapped in turn by a thousand savages.

Major Benjamin Church of Massachusetts, the doughty Indian fighter, was in it from the start. To New Englanders he epitomized all the dashing military qualities that had made England great. He might be rotund of figure and flamboyant in his personal chronicles of battle, but what other leader had proved half so determined in pursuit, so cleverly subtle in tactics, so courageous in hand-to-hand combat? Now he was relentless in tracking King Philip down. And King Philip, the perennial fugitive, was as dangerously adroit as his pursuer.

The bulky figure of Major Church was everywhere—scrambling into the shelter of a bush, after his horse was shot out from under him in a shower of lead, and a bullet lodged in his foot; sprinting from a river bank in shirt, without breeches, to warn a fort that an Indian was escaping past its ramparts; shouting in a clash at close quarters, "Fire at will, men! If we fire together they will be on us with their hatchets!" Majors, captains, lieutenants crumpled all around, but Major Church was seemingly indestructible, shooting, slashing, grappling with the savages.

This was a war fought in and out of shadowy forests and glades, in verdant pea gardens, in the hay fields, a war in which quarter was rarely asked or given. When English reinforcements came upon a recent battle scene, they knew it must have been very closely contested if they found the Indians gone and seven or eight wounded English soldiers still living.

The colonists soon discovered it was folly to send a regulation army marching after the savages, for they evaporated from its path and attacked elsewhere. Wherever the army was, the Indians weren't. The colonists were to remember this lesson from the Indians a century later when they used guerilla strategy to fight King George's armies.

Once Major Church was sure he had King Philip trapped near a river bank. Then suddenly three hundred savages materialized from nowhere to besiege the Massachusetts militiamen, and not Philip, but Church, was trapped. As the musket fire rattled on it was obvious that Church's only hope lay in rescue by sea. He fought a rearguard action until a sloop, under brisk covering fire,

sent in a canoe to take off troops. The manoeuvre was repeated until Church himself was the last to leave, then he remembered he had left his hat and sword at a well where he slaked his thirst. In a typical Churchian gesture he boldly faced the Indian ring with his musket at the present, walked along to the well, retrieved his possessions, fired off the musket in a farewell salute—and ran for the canoe.

The volley of Indian shots that accompanied him snipped off a lock of Church's hair; moments later, a bullet snapped away the stick on which he was leaning his elbow in the canoe and he fell headlong to the floor.

Several times more King Philip ambushed him. Once Church was so badly shot that two men had to help hoist him onto his horse. Finally the evening came when the chief was cornered in a swamp near his dwelling place. Half-dressed, King Philip ran out into an ambushade. An English bullet missed him but an Indian on the English side found the mark, and the great rebel slammed down into the mud.

The New England officers awarded the head and hand of King Philip to the renegade Indian marksman, who exhibited them around at the garrisons for profit. Now an animated controversy arose: What should be done with Philip's captured squaw and nine-year-old son? Some Puritan clergymen, who had been urging the army to hunt down Philip's forces "with dogs, as we do wild bears," came out vehemently for killing them. They cited biblical quotations about destroying the seed. Others counselled calmness, common sense and mercy. The authorities decided to be merciful. They did not execute King Philip's squaw and little boy, but sold them into slavery in Spain.

When the war was over, Thomas Gyles lost no time in hastening back to Merrymeeting Bay. He had chafed in Long Island; he disliked the climate. But he found Merrymeeting Bay deserted. So he chose to settle in Pemaquid, a spot midway between the Kennebec and Penobscot rivers—a settlement first visited by English explorers in 1605, and older even than Boston—where new farm plantations were springing up. He spent money from his inheritance to buy up large tracts of fertile land. Governor Duncan, glad to see such a reputable gentleman establishing himself there, appointed Thomas Gyles Chief Justice of the region—the County

of Cornwall in the Province of New York. This turned out to be anything but an easy position. It is recorded "he met considerable difficulties in the discharge of his office, from the immoralities of a people who had long lived lawless."

But despite his official problems, Thomas Gyles had a pleasant unofficial life. The more law-abiding citizens affectionately regarded his household—the judge and his wife; their four sons and two daughters—as a model family of Puritan character. And so it was, even though unseemly peals of laughter sometimes came from the windows at dinner time when the devoted father slipped from grace enough to joke with the children.

One bright August morning—the balmiest day of the summer in Pemaquid—Judge Gyles decided to take the older boys to help the labourers at his farm, three miles from Fort Charles, the little redoubt that guarded the sea approach to the village.

"You might as well come along too, John," he called out, restraining a smile. "We could use an extra strong man today."

Especially he wanted to take John. The boy was nine now and felt slighted. Neither tall for his age nor broad of frame, he did not always fill out his handed-down clothes, which tended to bunch in places. Yet he insisted he could work as hard as his bigger brothers.

It was a sight to warm the spirit of a gentleman farmer, there beside Pemaquid Falls—the undulating sea of lush hay waiting to be cut, the eager rows of English corn stretching upward and coming into ear. Surveying his first bumper harvest swelling, the judge was a proud and happy man in spite of his self-imposed Puritan code. It was "one of the clock," on August 2, 1689.

"Hark!" he said suddenly. "Did you hear that?"

A boom reverberated across the fields.

Then another—and another long rolling detonation.

"Is it thunder?" asked John.

"The great guns of the fort! It surely is good news—the Great Council has sent back the soldiers who deserted, to cover the inhabitants."

Even little John realized what this meant. Only a few months ago Fort Charles was at full strength with one hundred and fifty-six soldiers. Then the council had withdrawn all but thirty of the garrison to reinforce other outposts in the border country facing

French Acadia. This in itself was bad enough, but worse was to come.

A man-of-war had brought news to Boston that the former King James II. had sailed from France for Ireland to challenge King William's ascendancy in England. Self-willed Boston, long restive under the autocratic taxation policies of the Crown, forthwith rebelled against despotic New England Governor Sir Edmund Andros—who had thrown out many of the old government officials—and clapped him in gaol. This sent a shock wave through the colonies. Numerous troops seized the excuse to quit their posts. Pemaquid's fort was left with only eighteen men.

True, peace had prevailed in New England since the redoubtable Major Church ran the elusive Indian King Philip to the ground thirteen years before—and that bloody conflict with the savages had been fought mostly far west of Pemaquid.

But lately there had been ominous rumblings. North Yarmouth was attacked by Acadian Indians last autumn. Saco was assaulted in January. Ugly rumours were aying Quôchech in New Hampshire had been ravaged only a few weeks ago. A new Indian war, ignited this time by the French, might be ready to sweep across the frontier like a forest fire.

Now thank the Almighty, the guns were apparently signalling all was well at Pemaquid. The safety of the town was assured, and Thomas Gyles was admiring the fruits of his labour.

No one saw the eyes glinting from the nearby spruce forest—eyes that had been patiently watching the peaceful pattern of Pemaquid life for days. No one knew that war parties of Maliseets, Micmacs, Passamaquoddies and Penobscots had secreted their canoes two miles away and crept stealthily through the woods.

What happened in the next moment can best be told by young John Gyles' own journal of years afterwards. (The first paragraph is quoted in the quaint capitalization of the period.)

To our great Surprise, about Thirty or Forty Indians discharged a Volley of Shot at us from behind a rising Ground near our Barr. The Yelling of the Indians, the Whistling of their Shots, and the Voice of my Father whom I heard cry out "What now! What now!" so terrified me, though he seemed to be handling a Gun, that I endeavoured to make my Escape.

My Brother ran one way, and I another; and looking over my Shoulder I saw a Stout Fellow, painted, pursuing me with a Gun, and a Cutlass glittering in his Hand, which I expected every moment in my Brains. I presently fell down, and the Indian took me by the Left Hand. He offered me no abuse, but seized my Arms, lifted me up, and pointed to the place where the People were at Work about the Hay and led me that way.

As we went we crossed where my father was, who looked very pale and bloody and walked very slowly. When I came to the place I saw two men shot down on the flats, and one or two more knocked on their heads with hatchets, crying out, "Oh Lord, etc."

The dazed boy plodded on mechanically, staring as in a strange nightmare. The sudden quiet was unbearable, and threatened to suffocate him. Where moments before the air had been filled with shrill war-cries, musket blasts, pounding, and screaming, now there was only eerie silence, punctuated occasionally by the moans of the dying and the crackling of the flames from the farmhouse.

Beside him, herded along by the Indians, were other captives—two labourers and his fourteen year-old brother James, who like himself had tried to escape when the uproar started. At the end of the line was his father. There was no sign of sixteen-year-old Thomas.

"I think he made it to the woods," gasped James, wide-eyed. "If he can get through to the point opposite the fort, he can swim to one of the fishing vessels."

A glaring warrior, face grotesquely striped with paint, motioned the boys apart. He pointed eastward.

After a quarter of a mile march the Indians called a halt; and Judge Gyles, shocked, stumbling, obviously too badly wounded to keep up, was pushed forward by a painted brave.

"You must die," said the savage simply, in English.

A friendly Indian of the Pemaquid region, "Old Moxous," a Kennebec chief, shuffled up to speak to Judge Gyles.

"I am sorry this happened," he told the reeling man. "But these are strange Indians."

Judge Gyles, with an effort, spoke to his captors:

"I am a dying man. I want no favour of you but to pray with my children."

He looked very pale, because of his great loss of blood, which now gushed out of his shoes.

The warriors drew away.

"To the protection and blessing of God Almighty I recommend you," Judge Gyles said in an encouraging, almost cheerful voice. "I have given you my best advice, and I know you will follow it perseveringly. I take my leave for this life, hoping we shall meet in a better land."

John Gyles' journal related:

The Indians led him aside. I heard the blows of the hatchets, but neither shriek nor groan! I heard afterward that he had five or seven shot holes through his waistcoat or jacket, and that he was covered with some boughs.

Now the Indians prodded their prisoners along the river bank toward the fort. When they came within a mile and a half of the town they saw flame and smoke funnelling up on all sides. Pemaquid was being razed to the ground.

They trudged into a thick swamp, where John and James found their mother and two sisters and numerous other captives from the town. At once Mrs. Gyles inquired about the Judge, and when her son told her of his death, she burst into tears. The Indians moved John farther off and bound him with cords to a tree, as if he were a wilful disturber of valuable captives.

From hushed snatches of conversation the prisoners learned enough from each other to piece together what had transpired in the attack. The war party, numbering about one hundred braves led by French officers, had cached their canoes at New Harbor east of Pemaquid where twelve fishermen's huts had been abandoned months before at the first mutterings of another Indian War. The invaders had despatched spies to steal through the woods and observe how the New England settlers were employed. They saw that the men were generally at work at noon, leaving only women and children at home.

Therefore, the Indians divided themselves into several parties, some ambushing the way between the fort and the

houses, as likewise between them and the distant fields; and then alarming the farthest off first, they killed and took the people, as they moved toward the town and fort, at their pleasure, and very few escaped to it. Mr. Pateshall was taken and killed as he lay with his sloop near the Barbican, a point of land on the west side of the river.

Mrs. Gyles reassured James, and through him the pinioned nine-year-old John, that their smallest brother, just a baby, was perhaps safe for the moment.

"We hear," whispered James, "that Tad was at play about the fort when the first stir began. He is said to have scampered in. By God's grace he may be preserved."

Into the swamp came thunderclaps still resounding from the cannon at Fort Charles. The commander, Captain Weems, was putting up a resolute defence despite the puniness of his garrison.

The fort was not impenetrable. It had only two guns aloft, and an outwork about nine feet high with two bastions in the opposite angles, in each of which were two cannon; another cannon was mounted at the gateway. For two days Fort Charles held out; then the firing ceased.

Captain Weems, his face torn by grapeshot, several of his men wounded, had at last "beat for a parley." He asked for these conditions:

- (1) The Indians should give him Mr. Pateshall's sloop.
- (2) They should not molest him in carrying off the few people who had got into the fort and three captives the English had taken.
- (3) The English should carry off in their hands what they could from the fort.

John Gyles penned in his journal:

On these conditions the fort was surrendered, and Captain Weems went off; and soon after, the Indians set on fire the fort and houses, which made a terrible blast, and was a melancholy sight to us poor captives, who were sad spectators.

Apparently John Gyles was never aware of the fact that the warriors reneged on their promise, as so often happened in the heat of Indian wars, for his journal does not mention that although

Captain Weems and six of his garrison got safely to the shoalop, seven or eight other defenders were tomahawked as they ran and limped for the shore. Either the French officers countenanced this on the theory that the end justified the means, or they were incapable of controlling their wrought-up Indian allies.

After a night at New Harbor, the birchbark canoe procession of Indians and captives plunged out into the briny Atlantic rollers for the journey up the coast to the Penobscot River. Wrote John Gyles:

About noon, the canoe in which my mother was, and that in which I was, came side by side; whether accidentally or by my mother's desire, I cannot say. She asked me how I did. I think I said "pretty well," but my heart was so full of grief I scarcely knew whether audible to her.

Then she said, "Oh, my child! How joyful and pleasant it would be if we were going to old England, to see your Uncle Chalker and other friends there! Poor babe, we are going into the wilderness, the Lord knows where!"

Her head fell forward sobbing, and the canoes parted.

## A STRANGE HOSPITALITY

A night on an island—and then the Indians and their travelled captives landed at the French Penobscot River fort. To his relief, John Gyles was able to talk with his mother, brother, sisters, and many other prisoners during an eight-day stay.

Then an ominous new threat confronted him. John's Indian captor took him to see the Jesuit missionary of the place, Father M. Thury. To the Puritan boy it was like being invited to make a personal call on Satan.

Father Thury seemed vaguely familiar; and no wonder. He had been with the Indian-French assault on Pemaquid. A missionary always went along on raids as chaplain, and urged the Christian Indians to show mercy and charity, which was sometimes like asking tigers to show compassion to sheep.

The missionary looked smilingly on John, and from his robes brought forth several pieces of gold. He was offering them for the lad's ransom; an Indian who took a prisoner was accounted his master and could sell him or kill him at will.

Unimpressed, the warrior shook his head.

"Wait, then," the French-speaking priest said as he rummaged in a cupboard. He came back and offered John a biscuit.

"Thank you," said the boy, and hurriedly stuffed it in his pocket.

On his return to the captives' corral, famished though he was, he hid the biscuit under a log. He feared it contained some potion to make him susceptible to the blandishments of Popery.

John Gyles recorded in his journal:

Being very young, and having heard much of the Papists

torturing the Protestants, caused me to act thus; and I hated the sight of a Jesuit.

When my mother heard the talk of my being sold to a Jesuit, she said to me, "Oh! my dear child, if it were God's will, I had rather follow you to your grave, or never see you more in this world, than you should be sold to a Jesuit; for a Jesuit will ruin you, body and soul."

It was one thing to be borne off into an unknown world by savages; but to a devoutly iron-willed Puritan it was infinitely worse to fall into the clutches of this alien religion.

Up the forest-lined Penobscot River, John's Indian master stolidly paddled and poled the canoe. The boy was now separated from his family; but he had company of a sort. He was no longer in mortal fear of his captor, for he sensed he had some value, like a young work horse. He would not be killed—at least, not yet.

The two presented an odd contrast. John so small, so fair of skin and hair and blue-eyed, in muddy English clothing; the Indian stalwart and swarthy, jet-black of hair and eyes, his broad bare back glistening in the hot sun as sweat ran down and then trickled angle-wise across the daubs of crimson warpaint to drip into his cloth flap.

"Where are we heading?" John asked, forgetting that not a word would be understood, for around Pemaquid all the Indians had known English.

The warrior grunted replies that always sounded the same to John's ears, as if he knew only a few syllables of his own language and used them over and over.

Another time the lad asked, "We should surely arrive soon at a town, don't you think?"

No reply. But it cheered John up a little to talk. He could hardly wait: There must be a town soon, and a town meant a clean bath, civilized food, laundered clothes.

Eventually they came to an Indian village called Madawamke, on a point of land between the main river and a branch which curved eastward. John Gyles' journal recalled:

At home I had ever seen strangers treated with the utmost civility and being a stranger, I expected the same kind of treatment here.

But I soon found myself deceived, for I presently saw a number of squaws who had got together in a circle, dancing and yelling. An old grim-looking one took me by the hand, and leading me into the ring, some seized me by the hair, and others by the hands and feet, like so many furies; but my master presently laying down a pledge, they released me.

A captive among the Indians is exposed to all manner of abuse, and to the extremest tortures, unless his master, or some of his master's relations, lay down a ransom such as a bag of corn, a blanket or the like, which redeems him from their cruelty for that dance.

Next morning, through a cathedral-like fastness of pine spires—some reaching two hundred feet into the sky—they went up the Mattawamkeag tributary for many leagues. With John trotting at his heels trying to keep up, the Indian toted the canoe upside-down over his head across portages to the Chepuneetcook Lakes. Thence they portaged to North Lake, paddled into First Eel lake, from which they reached the Meductic (Eel) River "which vents into the St. John."

The boy could now understand why the light birch-bark canoe—contrasted with the heavy dug-out poled by some New England Indians—was so favoured by these foreign Indians. They used the multitude of interlocking rivers and branches as Nature's carriage-roads.

Balancing the canoe's centre-brace precisely across his shoulders, O-ski-tchin could hike past rocky rapids and waterfalls as unconcernedly as if he had nothing to carry.

"O-ski-tchin" was his master's name, John had gathered. In one of his rare communicative moods the savage had pointed to himself and said the word repeatedly. Not until weeks later was John to discover that "O-ski-tchin" merely meant "Indian" or "human being." But the name stuck. In turn, he became "Chon"—the nearest the Indian could pronounce it.

The final portage was a long one of six miles. Here O-ski-tchin went ahead, leaving John in the care of an old Indian and three squaws. To the boy's elation, the ancient one could speak some English.

"By and by come to a great town and fort," he said.

John wrote:

I now comforted myself in thinking how finely I should be refreshed when I came to this great town.

After some miles' travel we came in sight of a large cornfield, and soon after of the Maliseet fort, to my great surprise. Two or three squaws met us, took off my pack, and led me to a large hut or wigwam, where thirty or forty Indians were dancing and yelling around five or six poor captives, who had been taken some months before from Quoquech, at the time Major Waldron was so barbarously butchered by them.

Immediately he was whirled inside the circle of Indians, "and we prisoners looked on each other with a sorrowful countenance." Presently one of the captives was grasped by each hand and foot by four Indians. Swinging him high, they let his back crash on the ground with full force. Repeating this procedure with prisoner after prisoner, the exuberant savages thus danced around the whole wigwam, which was thirty or forty feet long. Whenever they came to a small boy, two Indians alone could easily heave him up and let him smash.

Another of their customs of torturing captives is to take up a person by the middle, with his head downward, and jolt him till one would think his bowels would shake out of his mouth. Sometimes they will take a captive by the hair of his head, and stooping him forward, strike him on the back and shoulder till the blood gushes out of his mouth and nose.

Sometimes an old shrivelled squaw will take up a shovel of hot embers and throw them into a captive's bosom. If he cry out, the Indians will laugh and shout and say, "What a brave action our old grandmother has done!" Sometimes they torture them with whips, etc.

The Indians were staring at John with fearsome visages. He knew his turn was next. In desperation he tried to smile at them; but his heart was too heavy. He was holding his hat in his hands like a bowl; and the Indians standing near by, watching the fun and champing cornstalks, idly tossed the chewed fibres into the hat. He looked hopefully from one to another, but could see no face showing a semblance of pity.

Then, unexpectedly, a squaw and a little girl came forward and laid a bag of corn in the ring. The girl, shyly smiling, took John by the hand, and made signs to him to leave the fateful circle.

John drew back. He feared they were about to slay him. A grave Indian approached and handed him a short pipe.

"Smoke it," he said in English. Then he grasped John's wrist and led him out of the wigwam.

Puffing and choking on the fumes in his mouth and nostrils, the terrified boy felt sure his last hour had come. He was too scared to walk, and the Indian picked him up and carried him to a hut a mile away owned by a Frenchman. While the Indian and the Frenchman's squaw talked, the boy sat by, watching apprehensively. Two hours later the Indian led him back to the village and gave him food.

It was a puzzling episode, but it dawned on John that in the inexplicable way of the aborigines, he had been shown kindness. He felt grateful and somehow strengthened for whatever trials the future might hold.

The dark disaster that befell the garrison at Quochech<sup>1</sup> had a bright side for John Gyles. It left him a slave-friend his own age—Jack Evans. A curly-headed, happy-go-lucky lad, Evans promptly became known to the captives as Jolly Jack, from a popular ballad about English tars. Being boys the two could adapt to their predicament better than the adult prisoners, who remained irconcilable. In the excitement of sharing new-found adventure they could sometimes forget their environment. Even collecting eggs for the Indians—one of John Gyles' chores—seemed like play.

"But where do they keep their hens?" Jack asked on his first excursion. "I have not heard a cackle since I left home."

"They are not hens' eggs—these are buried in the sand."

"Like a pirate's treasure? But what kind of bird would do that? And how do you find them if there is no nest?"

"Always about a foot beneath the surface, near some deep still water," John explained. "Tortoise eggs!"

Jack was incredulous.

"But are they not very small eggs, from such small creatures?"

"Not so inconsiderable," replied John; "the shells of these St. John River tortoises are as much as sixteen inches wide. But locating them—that is the trick! The tortoises are very curious in covering them, so that there is not the least rising of sand where they are deposited. Watch me!"

<sup>1</sup> Later Dover, New Hampshire.

<sup>2</sup> John Gyles wrote in his journal: "In their cotton they may be heard half a mile, making a noise like a woman washing her linen with a beating staff."

At random he kept thrusting a stick into the river sand, right, left, forward.

Suddenly the stick came up with part of an egg clinging to it. Now they dug quickly but carefully, and soon uncovered more than a hundred tortoise eggs.

"Eureka!" cried Jack. "This must be the henery!"

"They are good eating when boiled," John Gyles pointed out. "So too is tortoise flesh. I am told by one of the Quochech captives that there is a difference of time in which they hatch—between twenty and thirty days. I don't know whether this difference is due to the heat of the sand. As soon as they are hatched, the young tortoise breaks through the sand and he takes himself to the water without any further care or help of the old ones."

From his new companion and other Quochech survivors John Gyles heard about the events which led up to their capture.

The groundwork had been laid thirteen years ago in September, 1676, at the end of King Philip's War, by the deception of Major Waldron, commander of the Quochech outpost. Four hundred eastern Indians were quietly encamped near his fort when two companies of Massachusetts troops under Captains Sill and Hawthorne arrived hotfoot after fugitive savages. Major Waldron contrived with them to sort out any Indians who had taken part in the war and had slain Englishmen.

Let us present a military review and sham battle after the English manner," the major proposed to the Indian chiefs. "My men will form one side, your braves another. It will be very instructive and edifying to the assembled colonists."

The Indians agreed, trusting Major Waldron implicitly.

For several minutes the mock manoeuvres went smoothly, each group pretending to seek tactical advantage over the other until the Indians, as arranged, fired a volley into the air. Immediately they were surrounded by the English forces and made prisoner.

One young warrior broke away, twisting and turning, and vanished behind some settlers' homes. Troops sprinted in pursuit.

A housewife, Mrs. Elizabeth Heard, was startled by the sight of a panting brave in her wooded doorway.

"Save me! Save me!" he pleaded.

Without even knowing from what he was fleeing, she impulsive-

ly hid him in the kitchen pantry; but by the time a soldier, checking the homesteads, knocked at her back door she knew the Indian's side of the story.

"I have seen no one," she said.

Toward dusk the Indian accepted some food and slipped away like a wraith into the forest.

Subsequently two hundred of the captured warriors were released, the other two hundred were shipped to Boston to stand trial. Several swung from the hangman's rope; the rest were sold into slavery in Spain. The tribesmen who were left had a long memory.

More than a decade later, King William's War erupted. At Quochech the atmosphere was not even tense, for a local truce was in effect.

On the stormy night of June 27, 1689, two squaws appeared at the fort gate and begged leave to lodge in the main garrison house. They asked for the commander, Major Waldron, and told him a large party of Indian hunters was not far away, laden with beaver furs and wanting to trade with him the next day.

Major Waldron had long augmented his pay by shrewd dealings; his account books contained the names of scores of Indians deeply indebted to him for credit. Lacking proper scales, he always used his fist in the balance to represent one pound—the weight of a pound varying with how heavily he pressed down the fist.

Now he sucked in his breath at the thought of a shipment of beaver pelts.

"Let the poor creatures lodge by the fire," he ordered. Several subordinates questioned whether this was wise, but he waved them away.

The grateful squaws warmed themselves, then wandered about. Their sharp eyes took in the fact that the gates had no locks but were fastened with pins; and that no watch was kept.

When the garrison was asleep they scouted the entire stronghold, counting how many soldiers were in each apartment, and as soon as they knew exactly who was there, they sidled over to the gate, lifted the latch-pins, and quietly whistled a bird call.

Indian warriors, armed to the teeth, swiftly overwhelmed the

garrison. They hatcheted and knifed several soldiers in their beds—defenders who never even woke up.

For all his faults, and despite his eighty years, Major Waldron was a brave man. When the Indians burst into his inner apartment, he sprang out of bed wearing only a nightshirt, roaring, "What outrage is this?" Seizing his sword and wielding it like a man obsessed, he took them all on. Slashing, thrusting, swinging desperately, he scattered his attackers, driving them back through three doorways.

But as the Major turned to flee into his apartment and barricade it, an Indian tomahawk struck him down. They hauled him out to another room, stretched him on a long peltry table and yelled: "Judge the Indians' again!"

As they danced around, waving the major's account book, one after another the Indians gashed his bare chest with their crooked knives, shouting, "I cross out my account!"

They sliced off his ears and nose and stuffed them in his mouth, then, each in turn lopped a joint off his fingers, crowing: "Will your fist weigh a pound now?"

Finally they tumbled the half-conscious man off the table. As he fell, an Indian held the commander's sword near the floor and skewered him.

So mercifully, death came at last to Major Waldron. His garrison house was burned to the ground. The Indians' score: twenty-three English killed and twenty-nine taken prisoner.

On the same night, Mrs. Elizabeth Heard was returning from Portsmouth by boat with her three sons and a daughter. As they passed up the river, Mrs. Heard knew from the shouting and tumult something was wrong.

Hastily she herded her children toward Major Waldron's garrison house, for it was ablaze with lights and she thought this was a signal for stray persons to rally there. But when she pounded on the door, it was opened by a painted Indian warrior.

The children fled in all directions. Mrs. Heard fainted. When she regained consciousness she crawled under a bush by the road and cowered there, too weak to go farther. Eventually she drifted into a short exhausted sleep from which she awakened to find an Indian, pistol in hand, looking down at her without expression. He neither harmed her nor spoke to her. Later in the morning

when the Indians had left and a deathly silence fell over the village, Mrs. Heard made her way home, expecting to find it in ruins. But it was there, and the children and her husband were safe.

Not until some time afterward did she learn that the young Indian she had sheltered more than a decade ago had been a leader in the Quoquech attack.

He too had a long memory.

The forlorn white slaves at Meductic—the site of the Indian wooden fort—had ample time in the evenings to ponder Major Waldron's cupidity and the treachery of other colonists which, by infuriating the savages, had contributed to their present plight.

Neither the English nor the French, the captives knew, were guiltless in their exploitation of the Indians. Both bartered baubles for things sometimes priceless—furs or land or human lives. Jacques Cartier, in 1524, had not been averse to kidnapping a chief from the St. Lawrence to carry to France. Some early governors of Acadia had defrauded or forcibly robbed the savages of their pelts. Just this year Governor Denonville of New France had corralled fifty Iroquois to sell in France as slaves.

But the early English colonists in America had outdone the French in roughshod avariciousness. Captain John Smith in 1614 set an example by trading glass beads, cheap cloths of brilliant tints, axes and knives for "near 11,000 beaver skins, 100 martin, 100 otters." A companion repaid the Indians for their hospitality by abducting twenty-four savages to sell as slaves in Malaga, Spain.

The gullible Indians gladly gave away their birthright for trinkets. A settler in Fairfield, Connecticut, purchased from the Nowalk tribe a huge tract of land—"as far as a man could walk in from the sea in one day"—in exchange for valuable considerations that included "10 scissors, 10 looking-glasses, 10 jewsharps."

When fences went up, when white men ordered them off, the Indians were baffled and furious, often believing they had only sold the right to share their land. Resentment burned deep and was handed down to the next generation. An Indian never forgot a boon nor forgave an injury.

Some charitable English voices cried out for more understanding

of the simple savages, for respect of their natural moral rights, but these pleas were drowned in the march of progress. To most settlers the Indians were fair game to be made drunk and mulcted, then persecuted and scorned.

Even as the French generously handed out gifts of muskets and colourful feathers to the Acadian Indians to get them to fight the English, the English were quick to bribe one neighbouring New England tribe to attack another that was threatening to become hostile toward them, and later, to be liberal to any Indians willing to fight the French. Fortunately for the New Englanders, they got along well with the warlike Mohawks, who as a rule never molested an Englishman nor a demented Indian of any tribe.

"Our side may have made some mistakes," admitted a tattered red-headed captive from Quoecheh in the Meductic slaves' wigwam at the end of a day's gruelling labour. "Nevertheless, I say I'm proud to be of the English breed when I think of men like Major Church!"

But the more thoughtful prisoners, having seen French officers on congenial terms with the Acadian chieftains, noticing that several French settlers had Indian wives, and observing the French missionaries celebrating mass for the tribesmen, could appreciate why the more aloof English had such a hard time trying to woo the friendship of these Acadian aborigines.

The French mingled, deferred to the savages' tribal customs, converted them to a primitive Christianity, gave them annual gifts by courtesy of the French crown, meanwhile fanning their hostility toward the English. On the other hand the New England authorities had consistently fumbled their chances to win over the Acadian red men. Too often they treated the Indians with either expedient injustice or, almost as unfortunate, a stiff-necked European-style justice that confused and enraged them.

"Our principal perversity, as I see it," the red-headed settler from Quoecheh grumbled in the slaves' wigwam, "is that we English too often overlook the high obligation the savages set on marriage ties. They gladly go to war for their brothers-in-law. That is what Governor Andros forgot at Pentagouet."

They all knew the story only too well. The Baron de St. Castin, a former officer of the Carignan Regiment in Canada, had settled years before at the outlet of the Penobscot River. He married a

daughter of the Maliseet sagamore Madockawando and built a fur-trading house. The Indians considered him a blood brother.

Forthrightly, if harshly, clearing the way for New England traders to do more business in Acadia, Governor Sir Edmund Andros first ordered the Baron to surrender Pentagouet; and then, getting no response, landed there with soldiers from a frigate. The Baron took to the woods. The English made off with his furs and provisions.

The Baron de St. Castin accepted it philosophically. He had influential friends in both Boston and Acadia who owed him favours.

"I shall wait," he said laconically.

But his father-in-law, Chief Madockawando, and his good friend Chief Taxous were furious. The insult clearly called for an attack on the English.

Though he was a forbearing man, the Baron didn't mind if they did. In fact, he enthusiastically urged them on.

After that, it was even easier to recruit braves for the vengeance at Quoecheh.

And, weeks later, for the destruction of Pemaquid.

"But you can wager on one thing," mused the red-headed captive as he pulled a rough blanket over his tired frame on a bed of fir boughs, "the bigwigs in Boston are white-hot with anger today. They are making plans for a grand assault that will sweep the Frenchies and their Indian consorts into the mire. I am fully of the opinion we shall be out of this calamitous travail before we know it. Major Church will be paying us a visit."

No one contradicted him, because no one wanted to believe differently.

The primeval eastern Canada in which John Gyles found himself a captive<sup>1</sup> looked far different in that era. Great white pines towered everywhere; they were to be felled later by mast-cutters for the Royal Navy, by lumbermen, and climatically by the historic Saxby Gale in the autumn of 1869.

Along the broad winding St. John River, the dense forests were rarely broken by open field or meadow. Wildflowers splashed colour on the river banks, but there were no dandelions, coltsfoot, daisies, clovers, rhododendron, orange-hawkeed (devil's paintbrush); caraway, or even burdocks. These, along with cinnamon roses, lilacs and wild apples, and cultivated grasses from lawn grass to timothy, were to come from Europe and New England with the white settlers.

Although the river and its tributaries teemed with fish—striped bass at times jammed the smaller streams so full that their backs arched out of the water—there were not yet any black bass, which were to come later from mid-Canada; nor rainbow trout, which still cavorted in their Rockies' haunts; nor brown trout, which had not yet arrived from Europe; nor pickerel, which were planted by passing railwaymen in the 1880's.

In the timberland were numerous rodents, including wood mice. But the common house mouse, which had reached the Mediterranean from Asia at the time of the Romans, was yet to cross the ocean. Similarly the grey rat and the black rat, which had swarmed into Europe by the Middle Ages, were waiting to bridge the Atlantic with the windships.

Big animals of the forest were, as always, appearing and disappearing. A locale eventually to become Lower Woodstock, New Brunswick.

appearing in cycles. John Gyles saw moose, but made no mention of deer, nor the caribou or wolves which the French explorer Champlain had found three-quarters of a century before.

Even the birds of John Gyles' day were a contrast. No pigeons then—originating in Asia, they were to be brought in later as pets and food. No bronze grackles, nor English sparrows (which were to make their appearance in the 1880's), nor evening grosbeaks (1915), nor meadowlarks and bobolinks, which came as civilization pushed back the forests. It was not until 1924 that the first starling swooped in, the forerunner of noisy millions.

But Nature compensated in other ways. John Gyles' era saw some species which have since become rare or extinct—especially shore birds. Among them were the long-billed curlews, several species of godwits, avocets and stilts, Eskimo curlew, Labrador duck, and the passenger pigeon, which flew overhead in such racketing hordes the sun was obscured and darkness fell on the land for twelve hours at a stretch.<sup>2</sup>

In Acadia of 1689—a domain embracing New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, part of Quebec, and Maine to the Penobscot River—the inhabitants were the sharpest contrast with today.

In addition to French settlers, there were four Indian tribes of Algonquin stock. The two thousand migratory Micmacs, or Souriquois, spoke a tongue of their own. Lithe hunters and paddlers of great stamina, physically toughened by their life, they disdained farming, and instead, ranged in quest of game and fish, waterfowl and clams, berries and roots, through a terrain extending all the way from the Gaspé Peninsula down the east coast of New Brunswick into Nova Scotia. They never stopped long enough to build a fort.

Along the St. John River Valley and up to Rivière du Loup

<sup>1</sup> A century later, when the United Empire Loyalist fleet sailed into Saint John from New York in 1793, there were a few deer in New Brunswick. Through the middle 1800's they were thought extinct; after 1880, when the last of the wolves were exterminated, the deer made a tremendous comeback. Today the legal deer kill, alone, is more than twenty thousand yearly in New Brunswick. The last of the caribou migrated out of the province by 1924. The diabolically mischievous wolverine had long since vanished.

<sup>2</sup> The passenger pigeon was gone from New Brunswick by 1899, and extinct in 1915.

lived one thousand Malisets (or Etchemins or Wulastukwiuk), who raised Indian corn, beans, and pumpkins.

To the westward in Maine were the Malisets' blood relatives the Penobscots; and on the coast between them, the cousins called the Passamaquoddies—a tribe which originated, according to legend, when a Maliset brave married a Penobscot maiden.

Beyond the Penobscots, in New England, were innumerable tribes large and small, some of them comparatively skilled farmers: Narragansetts, Massachusetts, Wampanoags, Mattachees, Pocassetts, Monomoyes, Nipmucks, Saukatucketts, Nashuas, and Podunks, to name only a few.

Most of these New England Abenakis cultivated peas, corn, squash, beans, pumpkins, and Indian tobacco. They looked down intolerantly on the backward nomadic Indians of Acadia, and, although usually friendly, sometimes captured a lone incautious Acadian Indian and sold him as a slave to the Massachusetts tribe.

Escape was never far from the minds of the captives at Meductic. It was all they had to live for. Escape—or liberation by English forces. They talked it, dreamed it, ate it, drank it. It buoyed up their spirits. It kept them going when they wanted to die—the easiest and quickest escape route.

Fortunately for morale, the Puritan character placed great trust in an all-seeing Presence guiding their destinies. Unlike some French missionaries around them, they could not believe that miracles would be granted on request, but they did believe in providential happenings, in God's influential watchfulness over them as a favoured people.

Even one as young as John Gyles could hope fervently, as he watched his Indian master packing food for a trip, that this would somehow lead him to freedom from bondage.

"Am I going too?" he asked. The big Maliset pointed to a heavy pack-sack, and John willingly wrestled it up on his back. He related:

We left this village and went up St. John's River about ten miles to a branch called Medockscenecasis, where there was one wigwam.

At our arrival an old squaw saluted me with a yell, taking

me by the hair and one hand, but I was so rude as to break her hold and free myself. She gave me a filthy grin and the Indians set up a laugh, and so it passed over. Here we lived upon fish, wild grapes, roots, etc., which was hard living to me.

With the advent of winter they paddled up the main stream—a party of ten, including the boy—until travel was hampered by the ice running down. Then they laid up their canoes in bushes near the shore, and set forth afoot into the uncharted wild.

For a white boy brought up in the sheltered life of a New England judge's home, it was unbelievably rigorous. He staggered under back-breaking pack loads. He had to learn to discipline his body to go without food for days.

But the Indians did not abuse him, and they underwent the same privations. They even tried to encourage him by muttering in broken English:

"By and by a great deal moose."

As yet he could not converse with them; he could not ask questions and expect answers, for he was only beginning to grasp a few Maliset words.

They trekked through forests and over ice-clad plains; they built rough timber rafts for ford open rivers. Often John Gyles discovered himself succumbing to a delusion common among hunters who search over-long for something—their ears and eyes begin to deceive them.

Knowing little of the savages' customs and way of life, I thought it tedious to be constantly moving from place to place, though it might be in some respects an advantage—for it ran still in my mind that we were travelling to some settlement. And when my burden was over-heavy, and the Indians left me behind, and the still evening coming on, I fancied I could see through the bushes and hear the people of some great town; which hope, though some support to me in the day, yet I found not the town at night.

As they moved deeper into the unknown, John marvelled, with a grudging admiration, at the risks the Indians took as part of life. He estimated they must be sixty miles from the nearest Indian

wigwam—ten hunters with but two guns, on which they wholly depended for food. If any disaster befell, all would perish.

Sometimes we had no manner of sustenance for three or four days; but God wonderfully provides for all creatures. In one of these fasts, God's providence was remarkable. Our two Indian men who had guns, in hunting, started a moose—but there being a shallow, crusted snow on the ground, the moose discovering them ran into the swamp.

The Indians went round the swamp, and finding no track, returned at night to the wigwam and told what had happened. The next morning they followed him on the track and soon found him lying in the snow.

In crossing the roots of a large tree which had blown down, the moose had trapped himself. He had broken through the ice, and one of his hind legs became inextricably tangled in the roots.

Thus extraordinarily were the nearly starving hunters succoured. It struck John as strange that he, an Englishman nurtured in a refined home where servants tip-toed in with the roast on a huge platter for the master to adjudge whether it were sufficiently browned, should now be dancing in wild abandon about the raw hairy carcass of a moose in a swamp. But circumstances change even Englishmen.

Sometimes the hunters shot a bear emerging from its cave after the winter's long sleep. Once they had the great luck to get a bear and four cubs, all very fat. Then the party really feasted.

On such occasions, wrote John, an old squaw and a captive, if any were present, must stand outside the wigwam, shaking their hands and bodies as in a dance and singing:

*"Wegage oh nelo wohn!"* ("Fat is my eating!")

This was to signify thankfulness. When the supply was eaten up, they fasted until the next success. Not that the Maliseets lived entirely from hand to mouth. They sometimes trimmed the meat from the bones and preserved it by drying it in smoke—"by which it is kept sound months or years without salt." But oddly, even in this early unexploited era, large game was rarely so plentiful that the Indians could plan comfortably for tomorrow even if they were willing to use foresight.

It mystified John that the Indians would sometimes show him humanity and next time turn a callous eye to his sufferings. He knew only one, the little Indian girl who had rescued him from torture, who always smiled at him. Her name, he had discovered after much endeavour with sign language was "Mal-lée" the accent on the last syllable.

It was such a pretty name—"Mal-lée"! It had a musical Indian sound. In fact, the Maliseet tongue sounded lilting rather than repetitious where she spoke.

But the French missionary called her "Marie" and she had a sister named "Kat-lin" which the priest pronounced "Katherine." The Indians were already giving their children white names, but they did not seem able to say "r." O-ski-tchin really bore a name which his fellow tribesmen pronounced "Plensue." The priest addressed him simply, "Francis."

The savage hunters were often considerate of John but sometimes they were not! On one excursion they killed several moose, and as the biggest lay some miles from the wigwam, they sent John and a young Indian to fetch it. The pair set forth in the cold morning, when the skies were promising; but dull slate clouds gathered as the day advanced. It was late in the evening when they found the moose. There was no time to collect wood for a fire or shelter. Snow began to float down; then became a swirling blizzard.

We made a small fire with what rubbish we could find around us. The fire, with the warmth of our bodies, melted the snow upon us as fast as it fell, and so our clothes were filled with water.

However, early in the morning we took our loads of moose flesh, and set out on our return to our wigwams. We had not gone far before my moose-skin coat (which was the only garment I had on my back, and the hair chiefly worn off), was frozen stiff around my knees, like a hoop, as were my snow-shoes and snow-clouts to my feet.

Thus I marched the whole day without fire or food.

At first I was in great pain, then my flesh became numb, and at times I felt extremely sick, and thought I could not

travel one foot further, but I wonderfully revived again.

After long travelling I felt very drowsy, and had thoughts of sitting down—which had I done, without doubt I would have fallen on my last sleep. My Indian companion, being better clothed, had left me long before. Again my spirits revived as much as if I had received the richest cordial.

Some hours after sunset I reached the wigwam and crawled in with my snowshoes on.

The Indians cried out, "The captive is frozen to death!" They took off my pack, and the place where it lay against my back was the only one that was not frozen. They cut off my snowshoes and stripped off the clouts from my feet, which were as void of feeling as any flesh could be.

I had not sat long by the fire before the blood began to circulate, and my feet to my ankles turned black and swelled with bloody blisters, and were inexpressibly painful. The Indians said one to another, "The feet of Chon will rot and he will die."

Yet I slept well at night. Soon after, the skin came off my ankles, whole, like a shoe, leaving my toes naked without a nail, and the ends of my great toe bones bare, which in a little time turned black, so that I was obliged to cut the first joint off with my knife.

The Indians gave me rags to bind up my feet, and advised me to apply fir balsam, but withal added that they believed it was not worth while to use means, for I should certainly die.

But, by the use of my elbows and a stick in each hand, I shoved myself along as I sat upon the ground over the snow from one tree to another, till I got some balsam. This I burned in a clam-shell till it was of a consistence like salve, which I applied to my feet and ankles, and, by the divine blessing, within a week I could go about on my heels with my staff.

And, through God's goodness, we had provisions enough so that we did not remove under ten or fifteen days. Then the Indians made two little hoods, something in the form of a snowshoe; and sewing them to my feet, I was able to follow them in their tracks, on my heels, from place to place, though sometimes half leg deep in snow and water, which gave me the most acute pain imaginable; but I must walk or die.

Yet within a year my feet were entirely well; and the nails came on my great toes, so that a very critical eye could scarcely perceive any part missing, or that they had been frozen at all.

## 5 THE MALISEETS WORK OF ART

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The first time John Gyles had seen the Meductic Indian settlement it appeared to be only a squalid fenced-in place with a long hut of about thirty by forty feet and a sprinkling of wigwams. True, the fence was a solid stake wall strongly interwoven with saplings, surrounded by a deep ditch, but by New England standards it could hardly be dignified by the name of fort.

After months in the frigid northern wilds, however, with only a handful of Indians for company, he envisioned Meductic in his mind almost like Boston. His feelings were always mixed as the end came to a hunting trip. The return to Meductic meant seeing friends again and hearing congenial talk, but it also meant harsh work of a different kind and the peril of beatings and tortures when the squaws got the notion to stage a frolic.

Nevertheless the settlement was much in his thoughts as the hunting party at last headed southward again when the spring sun warmed the ice-locked landscape and the rivers began to break with thunderous reports like cannon fire.

They reached a point north of the Lady Mountains (called Monts Notre Dame by the French) and close to the St. Lawrence River. Now they moved down to the headwaters of the St. John River, and transportation was no longer a problem.

"We made canoes of moose hides," John recorded, "sewing three or four together and pitching the seams with balsam mixed with charcoal."

They paddled down to Madawascook, stopped a few days at a trading post, then portaged past the greatest waterfall in Acadia, Grand Falls, 220 miles from the sea, which the Indians called "Checanckepeg" (the Destroying Giant).

En route, John was acutely reminded of what might lie ahead, where branches flowed into the main river there were encampments—and always a shrill cry of "A dance! A dance!" when the squaws espied the white boy. His master always bought them off. Then they recovered the birch canoes from where they had cached them in the fall, piled their baggage in, and glided out into the big stream. The feathery-light-birch-bark canoes sped like arrows on the crest of the swollen river in freshet.

Jack Evans was on the embankment, jumping and waving when the hunters' craft filed into view. He had long ago leaped, of course, why John was absent for so many months. But all those howling snowstorms and the endless numbing cold—it seemed hardly possible that human beings could live through it. "I have a pup of my own!" Jack called out, his eyes alight.

An Indian cuffed both boys to get to work. The expedition had to be unloaded.

Not until evening could Jack Evans explain. He had stolen a playful white pup from the Indians and hidden it a quarter of a mile away in the woods, in a sturdy compound he had built. He slipped away every day to feed the pup and take it for walks.

The boys were intrigued by the resourcefulness of old squaws who sometimes disdained the iron kettle and reverted to the old method. They put their victuals into a large birch dish, leaving a space in the middle. Then, filling the container with water, they kept dropping in hot stones, which thoroughly boiled the toughest meat.

By 1691, European influences were having far-reaching effects on the savages. The captives saw bows and arrows hanging unused in the wigwams, together with full-length shields, some of them blood-stained, great wooden clubs like croziers, and tomahawks with blunt stone heads.

Now the Indians preferred to hunt game—or humans—with the barking firearms that shot swift invisible arrows, to hack down their enemies with sharp iron-headed tomahawks that could cleave a skull neatly. They had learned to their grief that body-length shields were useless to turn away the white man's musket balls; but reluctant to waste anything in a world where few things were got easily, they hung up the shields in case harder times returned.

But John and Jack wanted to have bows and arrows of their own—European muskets were far less interesting—so O-ski-tchin obligingly tutored them in fashioning ash stocks for bows, fitting sinew string of the right thinness, chipping flint and bone for arrowheads, and tipping the shafts with symmetrical rows of feathers to guide them straight.

With the spur of competition their accuracy quickened. Because they were not Indians, they strove harder; soon both could match arrows in splitting butternut targets with anyone their age.

If O-ski-tchin had one very special knack, it was as a canoe builder. When hunting and fishing were slack, he often made a canoe to barter for highly polished wampum fashioned by the New England Narragansetts from the silvery and purple shell of the quahog, attached to strips of cloth woven from fir roots.

John loved to paddle the sleek hu-kwi-tun,<sup>1</sup> in which he had been brought from Pemaquid, a frail-looking craft, slender yet strong enough to withstand the angry buffeting of Atlantic waves. The Maliseet canoe was slimmer than the Micmac, which tended to bulge more at its high middle.

He was to learn that to the Maliseets canoe-making was both a skill and an art—the most painstaking product of their primitive culture.

"It is very important to choose a good tree," O-ski-tchin explained to his slave and Jack as they searched through a stand of white birches. "The bark must not be too thin, nor scarred by too many 'eyes'; and the tree must be straight and high before the branches start."

Suddenly he grunted with satisfaction. He was looking up on all sides of a magnificent tall birch. O-ski-tchin carefully laid a large sapling on the ground at right angles to the tree, so that when felled it would not bury itself in the moist soil. The branches would hold up the other end.

John and Jack retreated far off as the Indian's axe bit deep into the trunk. But the great birch crashed precisely where it was supposed to; and swiftly O-ski-tchin cut a circle around the trunk near the butt with his crooked knife, then another circle more than eighteen feet away just before the first branch, and made a straight cut along the trunk to join the circles.

<sup>1</sup> Canoe.

"Gather the scraps and light a small fire over there," he told the boys. "It will help to make the bark soft and supple."

Then he started to peel the trunk, working the bark away from both sides of the line of cut. At length a vast sheet of silvery bark, nearly nineteen feet long and three feet wide, slithered to the ground. This was passed slowly over the flames, back and forth, carefully so as not to let it catch fire; then it was rolled up like a carpet, bound with Indian rope of cedar bark, and carried to the river bank a quarter mile away.

"But when are we going to make the canoe?" asked John Gyles.

O-ski-tchin gave him a glance of obvious amusement. "You must learn patience, as Indians do," he said. "You will not be paddling this canoe for many days. But such a thing of grace and beauty is worth waiting for."

He dumped the roll into the river, in a spot where huge surrounding rocks would prevent it from drifting away. Then he piled stones on it and, for good measure, tethered it with Indian rope.

In the days that followed, while he waited for the river to season the bark and make it more pliable, O-ski-tchin kept his slave working like a beaver. John helped chop and whittle sixteen-foot long gunwales out of a cedar log. These thin-side rails were bound together at both ends with spruce roots, then braced apart, like two bows, with five cross-bars of rock maple.

Now came the exacting task of making the cedar ribs—nearly fifty of them, varying in length, broad but only a half-inch thick—each rib meticulously shaped by the Indian's tireless crooked knife. After the ribs remained in the river several days to tame the wood, O-ski-tchin retrieved them, poured hot water over them and beat them in pairs to the exact form they would take in the canoe.

"This is why you must know how to make a canoe before you can build one," he explained as he tied the ends of each bowed rib together with Indian rope to keep its contour. "You must be able to see the finished canoe in your mind—for each pair of ribs is curved differently from the others."

"Then how," asked John, "did the first Indian build his canoe?" O-ski-tchin thought for a moment, frowning, then abruptly told

the boys: "Come, all these must be laid out on the beach to dry in the sun."

They helped him clear a narrow ground space about twenty feet long, the canoe's shipyard. The Indian, after standing off and studying the land, added more earth in the middle until it was about two inches higher than each end, although an untrained eye might have to look twice to notice any difference.

Now they carried over the braced gunwales and laid them on the cleared space, the tips resting on two-inch-high pegs. And the last O-ski-tchin pounded a number of weatherbeaten stakes he had brought from the wigwam into the ground about a foot apart around the entire outline of the gunwales, like knives thrown to fragment a prisoner who was not due for killing yet.

For a few moments the puzzled boys thought the Indian had made a mistake, for he was methodically hauling out each stake and laying it beside its hole.

He motioned them to help him carry the gunwale framework away, and in its place he unrolled the giant sheet of bark, with the golden inner side on the ground. Back came the gunwales to lie on the bark, rocks weighting them down.

"Now I bend up the bark to form the canoe," said O-ski-tchin. "Pay close heed. When I point, slide each stake back into its hole."

Expertly he notched several V-shaped slices out of the bark, about a foot apart, then he raised each flap as the boys pushed in a stake to support it. Next the gunwales were raised into position, with stakes under the ends of each cross-bar.

Two long cedar strips were inserted inside the stakes and securely bound to both the bark and the gunwales. They now turned the canoe upside down on crude wooden stands so O-ski-tchin could round the ends; in bow and stern he inserted a thin curved length of wood between the bark edges, sewing and binding them into place with roots.

Finally, he covered the splits in the canoe with strips of bark, sealed by a pitch made out of pine balsam thinned with bear grease.

"Can we get in it now?" John Gyles could hardly wait; it had taken nearly three weeks to complete.

"You would not paddle far," replied O-ski-tchin, "for the ribs are still drying on the beach. Bring them now—gently"

But first he sheathed the whole interior of the craft with long thin strips of cedar, and the bark could no longer be seen. Then he pressed each rib into its place, beginning at the ends and working toward the middle; every rib fitted snugly like a hand in a glove.

All that remained was to insert a narrow oval piece of wood into each end, which had been filled with shavings for buoyancy, and to lash long cedar strips atop the gunwales.

"We can try it out?" asked John hopefully.

"In one or two days," O-ski-tchin assured him, backing up to admire the symmetry of his handiwork. "But now you can carry enough water to fill the canoe, so that we may see tomorrow if there are leaks we have missed."

It was nearly an hour before the sweating white slaves, lugging iron kettles back and forth from the river, had the canoe brim-full. O-ski-tchin was still standing there, critically appraising it.

"Even though I am weary nigh to dropping," John told his master, "it looks to me the finest canoe in Meductic."

The Malisect nodded.

"The birch is good to the Indians," he said. "It gives us wags, canoes, fuel, baskets, dishes, raincoats, parchment to mark on, horns to call the bull moose."

Then he added, "Next time, Chon, you will make your own canoe and I will be the helper. But we should mark this special day; so you may both go to the feast tonight."

## A FEAST FIT FOR A CHIEF

Well meant as it was, the boys knew O-ski-tchin's invitation was slightly hollow as far as they were concerned. Widow squaws and prisoners had the privilege of sitting only by the door of a festive wigwam, listening to the raucous sounds of laughter and good eating, and eventually salvaging some scraps after the guests had ambled their well-fed way homeward.

It was a privilege denied by Maliseet tradition to married women and Indian youths under twenty.

John Gyles in fact rarely missed a chance to be present, simply for something to do. Jack went sometimes, but balked when dog was on the menu.

Fortunately everyone always had a pretty good idea what was to be served. As John Gyles described it in his journal:

At an Indian feast you may request a bill of fare before you go. If you dislike it, stay at home. The ingredients are fish, flesh or Indian corn and beans boiled together; sometimes hasty puddings made of pounded corn, whenever and as often as these are plenty.

An Indian boils four or five large kettles full, and sends a messenger to each wigwam door, who exclaims: "Kuh men-scoorepah!"—that is, "I come to conduct you to a feast."

The man within demands whether he must take a spoon or a knife in his dish, which he always carries with him. They appoint two or three young men to mess it out, to each man his portion, according to the number of his family at home. This is done with the utmost exactness.

When they have done eating, a young fellow stands without

the door and cries aloud, "Men-scoommook!"—"Come and fetch it!" Immediately each squaw goes to her husband and takes what he has left, which she carries home and eats with her children. . . . The Indian men continue in the wigwam, some relating their warlike exploits, others something comical, others narrating their hunting exploits. The seniors give maxims of prudence and grave counsel to the young men, and though everyone's speech be agreeable to the run of his own fancy, yet they confine themselves to rule, and but once speak at a time. After every man has told his story, one rises up, sings a feast song, and others succeed alternately as the company sees fit.

O-ski-tchin's feast was an evening to be remembered. For long weeks before, hunting had been poor; O-ski-tchin and his squaw and slave had subsisted on fish. Then the Indian shot a great bull moose—and John had happy visions of a season's supply of smoked meat stored ahead.

"I have figured out," he told his master, "that now we have enough to eat for two and a half moons—enough till we come back from the long hunt up north!"

The big Indian looked down on the white boy as if he had suddenly gone mad.

"We have much food," O-ski-tchin said, "so we will have a feast! I will send messengers about the village, and also to all my cousins up the river, so they will know how well we fare. We will have many visitors in the great wigwam. Do not stand looking at me, Chon—come, you must help the squaw."

Was it communal generosity? Or merely vain improvidence?

John Gyles could never settle the answer in his mind.

But there was little time for speculation; feast preparations and canoe-building kept him busy each day from dawn to dusk. Then came the climactic evening when braves filed into the big cabin, each carrying his own birch-bark bowl and knife and squatting in a semi-circle that was soon four rows deep.

John was learning that the Indians followed rigid rituals in many things, including banquets.

First the oldest of the company—a wrinkled hoary-haired patriarch who was rumoured to have seen the snows of one

hundred and forty winters pass over his head—said grace, a French innovation.

The noisy eating began. Beside his large bowl each Indian had a small bowl full of grease or fat, into which he dipped the meat. Some, finding their fat hard, simply cut off a piece of it to accompany each mouthful.

Finally everyone was gorged. With one accord the guests wiped their hands in their black hair, which shone. In came the wives to tote away their husbands' bowls and leavings. Again the ancient ones said grace. All eyes now turned to the host who seemed buried in deep contemplation. For fifteen minutes a profound silence continued.

Then, abruptly, O-ski-tchin came to life. He ordered the pipes and tobacco in. Filling his own and lighting it, he sucked in two or three whiffs and presented it to a chief, the most important man in the gathering, whereupon all filled and lighted their pipes.

The most important man arose, and, making his way to the front of the semi-circle, began a speech of thanksgiving.

"Our master of the treat," he said, "is as a large and strong tree whose roots give nourishment to many small shrubs. He is as a salutary medicinal herb discovered by great good fortune in a lake. He is as a beneficent mild day in the midst of a harsh winter."

After comparing O-ski-tchin to many further admirable phenomena, the speaker extolled the host's forbears, starting with his great-great-grandfather.

"There was a warrior! He was one of that illustrious small company of braves who foiled the Mohawks by superior ingenuity. When they were overtaken by a large war party of the enemy one winter's night, they crept up in the dark and seized the Mohawks' snowshoes and burned them, thus making their escape."

He was just getting started.

"Our host's great-great grandfather was equally celebrated, for he was a hunter with magic powers who killed moose with only a spear and never missed his aim. Through secrets known only unto himself, he could compel elk and beaver and marten to run sooner into his snares than those of any other Indian. Always was he well provided with furs, and never did he fail to oblige his less fortunate friends."

"The great-grandfather, indeed, was even more renowned. He

was a great sagamore—one of the first Wulastukwiuk to meet the French and be converted to the faith. In doing so he bravely faced the fire-sticks of the strangers, for he feared neither man nor beast.

"And the grandfather—how many of us here assembled remember him gratefully! How often he came back from the sea with many seals, and regaled us a thousand times with flesh, and oil which he gave us to drink! How often we in our younger days greased our hair in his wigwam! And we remember, how, with kindly violence, he forced us to take oil home when our canoes were empty."

"Now we come to the father—a man whose prowess overawed us all. He could bring down game with one shot whether it was sitting or flying. He never missed his aim. He could imitate bird calls like no other, making it impossible to distinguish his cry from the bird's. He had, besides, a particular way of motion with his body, which at a distance might be taken for the clapping of the wings, inasmuch that we often deceived ourselves and were put into confusion when he emerged from his hiding place."

For a moment John puzzled over what had happened to the father—possibly one day his performance had been too realistic—but now he was eager to hear the accolade for O-ski-tchin himself.

But the most important guest had run out of superlatives. He merely said to O-ski-tchin, "As for yourself, I say nothing; I am too full of the good things you have treated me with to speak; but I thank you, and take you by the hand, and leave it to my fellow guests to fulfil that duty."

From the dim clouded past, John remembered his father commenting how strenuous it was to sit through an evening of banquet speeches; in this foreign wilderness it seemed little different.

Uprose another speaker who duly reviewed what had been said, praised the original spokesman, and, holding the host's hand, said at length that O-ski-tchin embodied all the virtues of all his progenitors and was a masterful canoe-maker besides.

Then he started advancing in measured steps toward the front of the cabin, singing, trembling, his body straight erect, his arms akimbo; back he went, then forward again, sometimes at a grave pace, sometimes brisk—chanting to the audience and emphasizing every key word loudly, whereupon the audience throatily shouted back the same word with a great roar.

His dance gradually became an uninhibited maddened frenzy; and when he tired, others in turn took up the stamping and trembling and shouting.

For the hungry widow squaws and captives outside the door, it was a long wait.

Even when moose were rarely seen, Nature usually provided bounteous other fare for the tribe. With long-handled fish-spears they harvested the bass that thronged the river in the spring when the apple trees planted by the French settlers were fragrant with white and pink blooms. They harpooned huge lazy sturgeon that looked like prehistoric armour-plated denizens of the deep. They trapped smelt, trout, gaspereaux, eels.

It was a hard and frequently dangerous life. But it was not all drudgery for the younger slaves, who often competed to see who would get the bigger catch from their traps, and with the resilience of youth made their own fun.

There were strange bird calls to listen to, and deep-toed animal tracks to follow along the wet sand. For hours on end when they were supposed to be scouring the forest for medicinal roots and herbs, John Gyles and Jack Evans would sometimes crouch motionless in the river-bank shrubbery—feeling as crafty as Indians—watching a family of beavers building a dam.

How perceptively John Gyles observed Nature can be gathered from the descriptive notes in his journal about:

Several Creatures Commonly Taken By The Indians On St. John's River.

*Of the Beaver.* The beaver has a very thick, strong neck; his foreteeth, which are two in the upper and two in the under jaw, are concave and sharp like a carpenter's gouge. Their side teeth are like a sheep's, for they chew the cud. Their legs are short, the claws something longer than in other creatures. The nails on the toes of their hindfeet are flat like an ape's but joined together by a membrane, as those of the water-fowl, their tails broad and flat like the broad end of a paddle.

Near their tails they have four bottles, two of which contain oil, the others gum; the necks of these meet in one common

orifice. With this oil and gum they preen themselves, so that when they come out of the water it runs off them as it does from a fowl. They have four teats, which are on their breasts, so that they hug up their young and suckle them as women do their infants. They have generally two, and sometimes four in a litter. I have seen seven or five in the matrix, but the Indians think it is strange to find so many in a litter; and they assert that when it so happens, the dam kills all but four.

They are most laborious creatures that I have met with. I have known them to build dams across a river thirty or forty perches wide, with wood and mud, so as to flow many acres of land. In the deepest part of a pond so raised, they build their houses, round, in the figure of an Indian wigwam, eight or ten feet high, and six or eight in diameter on the floor, which is made descending to the water the parts near the centre about four, and near the circumference, between ten and twenty inches above the water. These floors are covered with strippings of wood, like shavings.

On these they sleep with their tails in the water; and if the freshets rise, they have the advantage of rising on their floor to the highest part. They feed on the leaves and bark of trees, and pond-lily roots. In the fall of the year they lay in their provision for the approaching winter, cutting down trees great and small. With one end in their mouths they drag their branches near to their house, and sink many cords of it. (They will cut down trees of a fathom in circumference.) They have doors to go down to the wood under the ice. And in case the freshets rise, break down and carry off their store of wood, they often starve.

They have a note for conversing, calling, and warning each other when at work or feeding; and while they are at labour they keep out a guard, who, upon the first approach of an enemy, so strikes the water with his tail that he may be heard half a mile. This so alarms the rest that they are all silent, quit their labour, and are to be seen no more for that time. If the male or female die, the survivor seeks a mate and conducts him or her to their house, and carry on affairs as above.

*Of the Hedgehog.* The hedgehog, or urchin, is about the bigness of a hog six months old. His back, sides, and tail are full of sharp quills, so that if any creature approach him, he will contract himself into a globular form, and when touched by his enemy, his quills are so sharp and loose in the skin they fix in the mouth of the adversary. They will strike with great force with their tails, so that whatever falls under the lash of them are certainly filled with their prickles; but that they shoot their quills, as some assert they do, is a great mistake, as respects the American hedgehog, and I believe as to the African hedgehog or porcupine, also.

*Of the Wolverine.* The wolverene is a very fierce and mischievous creature, about the bigness of a middling dog, having short legs, broad feet, and very sharp claws, and in my opinion may be reckoned a species of cat. They will climb trees and wait for a moose and other animals which feed below, and when opportunity presents, jump upon and strike their claws in them so fast that they will hang on them till they have gnawed the main nerve in their neck asunder, which causes their death. I have known many moose killed thus.

Once John Gyles was trudging along behind some Indians on a hunt when he heard them laughing raucously and pointing to marks in the snow. He hurried up and asked them what was so funny.

Constantly he was astonished by their ability to read a story in what seemed to him to be only trampled white landscape. Their senses were extremely acute. They could see, hear, feel, taste and smell things the white man could not. They never needed a compass; their keen eyes read the stars, or, if the sky was obscured, the bark and motion trees.

"Look, Chon!" said O-ski-tchin, "The track of a moose. A wolverene went up this tree, and—see?—sprang off upon the moose. The moose took many large leaps and came under the branch of a tree which struck the wolverene and knocked him off. And here, more tracks—the wolverene went away by another route, in short steps; he was stunned by the blow that broke his hold."

The Indians laughed gleefully, saying it was a clever moose to outwit a wolverene, and were "wonderfully pleased." John's journal added:

These wolverenes go into wigwams which have been left for 4 time, scatter the things abroad, and most filthily pollute them with ordure. I have heard the Indians say that this animal has sometimes pulled the guns from under their heads while they were asleep, and left them so defiled.

An Indian told me that having left his wigwam, with sundry things on the scaffold, among which was a birchen flask containing several pounds of powder, he found at his return, much to his surprise and grief, that a wolverene had visited it, mounted the scaffold, hove down bag and baggage.

The powder flask, happening to fall in the fire, exploded, blowing up the wolverene and scattering the wigwam in all directions. At length he found the creature, blind from the blast, wandering backward and forward, and he had the satisfaction of kicking and beating him about. This, in great measure, made up their loss, and then they could contentedly pick up their utensils and rig out their wigwam.

Fierce, malicious, diabolically cunning, this biggest member of the weasel family was the bane of the early Indians even as of later white trappers. He loved to sneak into a temporarily unattended campsite and make off with the blankets, furs, hatchets, powder horns—or preferably, drop them into the dying campfire.

The Maliseets knew the wolverene by several names—as the carcajou, as the black devil, as the lox. When a sharp white trader cheated them in a deal, they called him a carcajou.

A century later, in 1791, Scottish traveller Patrick Campbell wrote in his New Brunswick diary that a carcajou united a pack of furs stored in a lonely hut by an English trapper, and artfully concealed them. To deceive their owner, the wolverene "piled snow in heaps in a thousand different parts about the place. Mr. Higginbottom tipped up a great many of these in the hopes of finding some of the skins under them, but never yet found so much as one."

If the Indians set out a chain of traps ten miles long, "Lox will

destroy them all and hide the sticks"—the scheming animal could never rest until he sabotaged the whole chain.

Down through the years, the wolverene has vanished from the scene. But oddly, because he was called the "Indian devil" by white men, and since the night-screaming eastern panther became tagged with the same name, the erroneous idea spread that the latter too had disappeared from New Brunswick. The furtive eastern panther, a cousin of the Pacific cougar, was not rediscovered until comparatively recent years.

Time and again John Gyles narrowly escaped death. But far from disheartening him or making him think his luck could not last forever, the experiences only strengthened his conviction that an unseen Power was shepherding him toward release from bondage.

There was the sweltering season of near-famine when the Indians chased a large moose into the river and killed it. They hoisted the carcass on a scaffold in a great wigwam to prepare for a feast.

John hustled to keep the workers supplied with wood and water, and as a reward they gave him a piece of half-roasted meat, which he devoured eagerly "and not without due thankfulness to the divine Being who so extraordinarily fed me."

Then—*crash!* the heavy timber scaffold bearing the carcass broke and fell, striking John unconscious. When he came to he had extreme pain in a bruised hand, and it was long before he fully recovered.

He went fishing with an Indian for sturgeon. Driving a harpoon into a monster fish, the Indian slipped and overbalanced and the canoe overturned with John under it.

He couldn't swim. Desperately he clung to the cross-bar, with his face pressed up against the floor.

"Help!" he cried. The shout re-echoed unnaturally loud in his ears. He expected the Maliseet youth to tow him to safety. But no help came.

Twisting upward, John managed to get his chest over the cross-bar to relieve the strain on his arms. Thus he drifted with the

current, saving his breath, for a quarter of an hour—until finally he felt his toes touch slippery stones.

He hauled himself out from under the canoe to discover he was on a rocky point. Looking about, he saw the Indian half a mile up river, grappling with the fish in the water.

"Why did you not tow me to the bank?" shouted John angrily from the beach when he reached the scene. "You knew I could not swim."

The Indian, straining to drag his prize in, was too busy even to glance around.

"I knew you were under the canoe," he said, "for I saw no bubbles anywhere. I knew you would be carried to the point."

And he grunted as he tugged the sturgeon by the head partly up on the sand, for he had killed a wonderful ten-foot fish, and that was what mattered.

To go salmon spearing, the Meductic Indians travelled on foot to the fifteen-foot-high waterfall on the Eel River.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, hiking was the only way of transportation, for the six-mile stretch of river from the singing cascade to the big St. John stream was interspersed with rocky rapids and smaller falls. Fort Meductic was four miles up the St. John itself from the confluence of the rivers; but a portage trail six miles long led diagonally across forestland direct to the salmon falls.

This was one of the portages of the traditional Indian route from New England to Meductic—thence southeastward, via the Petcodiac River to the French stronghold of Port Royal, or up the St. John toward Quebec, or down the St. John to Menagouche where the river poured out into the Baie Française (Bay of Fundy). What had at first appeared to John Gyles as merely a long lake, or an Indian camping river, turned out to be a gigantic stream—the most important between the St. Lawrence and the Gulf of Mexico—hundreds of leagues in length from its headwaters to its mouth.

It was the proud boast of Micmac and Maliseet courtiers that when the St. John river was running strong they could paddle the more than four hundred miles from Quebec to Menagouche or Port Royal in four days. Fort Meductic was a crossroads, a mid-

<sup>1</sup> A stream which the Maliseets originally named Madawamiteok (Rocky at the Mouth) and which the French called Medoctack.

way station, a rendezvous, a key point on Acadia's great map of canoe highways. Indian war parties, captives, hunting groups, French fur traders, settlers and troops—it was, John thought, like living on the main post-road in Pemaguid, except instead of the clatter of coaches and the pounding of hooves you heard the swish of paddles dipping into the river, and the rippling gurgles of birch prows cutting the wavelets.

John Gyles was struck by the peculiar character of the rock path he and Jack Evans were traversing one day, as they neared the falls.

"See how it is furrowed?" he asked. "It is as though Nature provided a foot-path expressly for the savages."

"They have made it themselves—they could only have done it by travel!"

And it dawned on both that the aborigines must have been following this same trail almost from time immemorial—for countless moose-skin feet had worn the solid rock to a depth of two to three inches.

It was a sun-drenched late-summer afternoon—salmon spearing by torchlight was still hours away—and Indian youths and maidens were revelling in the pool below the falls. Among them were Mal-lee and her elder sister Kat-lin.

A Puritan boy couldn't help but notice how suitably proper the savage youths were—"although the Indians, both male and female, go into the water together, they have each of them such covering on that not the least indecency can be observed, and neither chastity nor modesty is violated."

"Come in, Chon," ordered Sa-pa-tis, a heavy-set young Maliseet brave.

"I cannot swim," the boy explained. "Nor can my friend."

"Dive in!" demanded the big Indian, pointing at the deepest place.

It was a double quandary. John hated to have Mal-lee and her sister see he was afraid—afraid both of the water and of Sa-pa-tis.

"Dive!" repeated the Indian, advancing. "Dive across the deep place—if you meet trouble, we will help you."

John threw himself in awkwardly, flailing his arms and legs as he sank, choking.

He felt his knees scrape the pebbly bottom, and blindly he

crawled ahead, not realizing he had not yet crossed the deep place but was heading straight into it.

Suddenly he felt himself pulled upward; strong arms held his chin above water as he spluttered, his eyes still tight closed.

When he managed to open them, he started to gasp thanks to Sa-pa-tis for saving him.

But the strong arms, he was embarrassed to discover, belonged to Kai-lin. Mal-lee was on the embankment, crying. Sa-pa-tis and his friends were farther along the beach, doubled up, guffawing.

John wrote in affronted tones: "I came near being drowned."

For some reason Sa-pa-tis bore John Gyles a grudge, almost as if the Indian were provoked at him for not being drowned.

One day at the Maliseet village when John was cutting wood and binding it up with an Indian rope to carry to his master's wigwam, a shadow fell and he glanced up to see Sa-pa-tis glowering down. The bulky twenty-year-old Indian was a formidable figure. Without warning he threw John backward, straddled his chest and pulled out a crooked knife.

"I am going to kill you," he hissed, his eyes malevolently glistening, "for I have never yet killed one of the English."

In terror, John heard his own voice cry: "You should go to war, then! That would be more like a brave warrior than slaying a poor captive who does slave work for the tribe."

The Maliseet, like one obsessed, with rapid motions of his arm slashed John several times across the chest.

Inflamed with rage, John yelled and seized Sa-pa-tis by the hair, wrenched mightily sideways, tumbled him off, and then like a tiger flew at him, lashing his assailant with furious fists, and driving his knee hard into the fat stomach.

"Enough! Enough!" cried Sa-pa-tis, staggering to his feet.

Breathing hard, John straightened up—but seeing the blood flowing down his chest and feeling the smart of the wounds, he went berserk and battered the Indian back to the ground.

"Get up!" he ordered. "Don't lie there like a dog!"

The Indian, his face in the mud, could only shake his head.

"You have abused myself and all the other captives," John shouted. "If you ever offer the like to me again, I will pay you twice over!"

He yanked Sa-pa-tis to his feet and shoved him headlong on his

way before picking up his burden of wood. Now, he realized, there was going to be trouble. He thought at best he would be tortured, at worst burned at the stake. He knew all about the gruesome retribution the Maliseets exacted from slaves who rebelled or tried to escape.

The only thing to do was to get the horrible business over with quickly, and seeing his master and some other Indians returning from a hunt, the boy hurried up to them and admitted everything.

"You did well!" said O-ski-tchin, and looked almost proud.

"Sa-pa-tis is a bad Indian," agreed another. "He is a puffed-up dog who wants to be a wolverene."

"Come in the wigwam, Chon," said O-ski-tchin, taking his arm. "We will put red ochre on your wounds to stop the blood."

Of Sa-pa-tis, John recorded in his journal: "I do not remember that ever he offered me the least abuse afterwards, though he was big enough to have despatched two of me."

Oddly, it was the other white boy, Jack Evans, who came nearer punishment. He had been sliding out of sight at every opportunity to be with his dog.

A young English girl, recently captured by Chief Madockawando's warriors and brought to Meductic, was swayed by her own hysterical imaginations to spread the story that the boy was plotting to run away.

Always ready to suspect captives of trying to desert Meductic in an attempt either to find their way to New England or to seek out the fearsome Mohawk allies of the English, the Maliseets collared the two and questioned them separately.

Their protestations of innocence were so earnest and similar—both fortunately omitting any mention of the dog—that they were soon released.

Oddly, too, the English girl was not punished for her false accusations. John Gyles observed repeatedly that while the Maliseets in the delirium of a raid would bludgeon a housewife and her children to death, they never harmed nor inflicted indignities on women captives.

"It gives me hope," he told Jack Evans, "that wherever my dear mother and two sisters are, they may yet be safe, through God's wonderful favour."

## A DANCE WITH THE MICMACS

What John Gyles did not know was that far from the pastoral St. John River events were taking place that would alter the whole course of his life.

The French-Indian assault of 1689 on his home town of Pemaquid, followed by other bloody raids in New England, had brought down grim retribution on Acadia.

One of the worst Indian massacres was the 1690 onslaught led by the French officer Portneuf against Falmouth.<sup>1</sup> The central strongpoint, Fort Loyal, surrendered in five days—but on condition that the garrison and fugitive settlers within be given safe conduct to the nearest English town. The pledge proved a travesty. More than one hundred men, women, and children were hacked to death by the savages, others were carried off. All through the summer and fall, corpses lay grotesquely scattered about the ground until Major Benjamin Church came by with a militia force and discovered them.

Meanwhile, a powerful New England expedition under Sir William Phips boldly struck at Port Royal, the heart of Acadia, and after burning the French pioneers' homes and barns, carried off Portneuf's brother, Governor Meneval, and his aides, to Boston as embarrassed prisoners.

Just then appeared on the scene still another brother, a resourceful tactician and dominating personality who was to engrave a lasting name for himself in Acadia and whom John Gyles was one day to meet—Chevalier Robineau de Villebon.

<sup>1</sup> Portland, Maine.

If de Villebon was fuming when he succeeded his captured brother as commander of Acadia, it was understandable. Port Royal was such a panorama of desolation that he decided to move his headquarters to the Jemseg fort on the St. John, across the Bay of Fundy. To aggravate things, the audacious sea pirate Jacob Leslor had swaggered in, devastated what remained of Port Royal, scourged the Acadian region of Gbignecto, and hanged two Frenchmen, burned a woman and her children, razed houses, and killed cattle. Then he had crossed to the St. John and stolen the ship *Union*, newly arrived from France loaded with guns, supplies, and presents for de Villebon to give the Indians.

Always an opportunist, de Villebon saw no reason to arouse the Indians against a buccaneer who might never be back. He shouted instead, "There go your gifts—to the English at Boston!" Angry howls from his savage listeners showed him he had salvaged at least something from the loss.

O-ski-tchin and his squaw had paddled away up river on a journey toward the St. Lawrence country. As it was the proverbial time to seed corn—"when the maple leaf is as big as a squirrel's foot"—O-ski-tchin sent John with some Indians down to Fort Meductic's planting land. On their way they met two young Indians paddling upstream in great haste.

"We are going with an express to Canada," one explained. "There is an English vessel at the mouth of the river."

John's heart pounded. This meant peace between England and France! And peace would surely bring the release of the captives. He only wished Jack Evans were back from hunting with his master—how excited he would be at the news.

Then they arrived at Fort Meductic—and pandemonium broke out.

No sooner had John stepped out of his canoe than four Indians grabbed him and dragged him to the great wigwam. There savages were dancing around one of the white captives, James Alexander, a Jersey man captured at Falmouth in Casco Bay.

The boy was stunned. What was happening? Who were these Indians cavorting, and whooping, and shrilling? He had never seen them before—but in another instant he knew, from their

dress as well as their physical appearance, they must be Micmacs.<sup>1</sup> The strangers were chanting, gyrating, bending their bodies forward and upward rhythmically, working themselves up to a wild frenzy.

A Maliseet standing near John explained in his ear, as casually as a spectator watching a quadrille in Pemaquid, "They are two families from Cape Sable who have lost some friends to a number of English fishermen. They have travelled hundreds of miles just to revenge themselves on our white captives!" He said it as if John would readily comprehend—as if he would perhaps even comment on what a remarkable journey they had undertaken for an understandable purpose.

John Gyles described what followed:

They soap came to me and tossed me about till I was almost breathless, and then threw me into the ring to my fellow captive, and taking him out repeated their barbarities on him. Then I was hauled out again by three Indians, who seized me by the hair of the head, and bending me down by my hair, one beat me on the back and shoulders so long that my breath was almost beat out of my body.

Then others put a tomhake into my hands, and ordered me to get up and sing and dance Indian, which I performed with the greatest reluctance, and while in the act, seemed determined to purchase my death by killing two or three of those monsters of cruelty, thinking it impossible to survive their bloody treatment; but it was impressed on my mind that it was not in their power to take away my life, so I desisted.

The strangers were not through with him yet. They converged on John again "like bears bereaved of their whelps, one shouting: "Shall we who have lost relations by the English, suffer an English voice to be heard among us?"

They beat him again—this time with an axe.

John wrote:

<sup>1</sup> This was the friendly Acadian tribe the Maliseets called *Matipewetichinuak*—the Porcupine People—from their habitual use of colourful dyed porcupine quills for ornamentation. Returning the compliment, the Micmacs called the Maliseets *Kausiwetichinuak*—the Muskrat People—because of their fondness for muskrat meat and their use of muskrat skins for underclothing.

Now I repented that I had not sent two or three of them out of the world before me, for I thought I had much rather die than suffer any longer.

They left me the second time, and the other Indians put the tomhake into my hands again and compelled me to sing. Then I seemed more resolute than before to destroy some of them; but a strange and strong impulse that I should return to my own place and people suppressed it as often as such a notion rose in my breast.

Not one of them showed the least compassion, but I saw the tears run down plentifully on the cheeks of a Frenchman who sat behind, though it did not relieve the tortures that poor James and I were forced to endure for the most part of this tedious day, for they were continued until the evening, and were the most severe that even I met with in the whole six years that I was a captive with the Indians.

At the end, the two captives were dealt with as uncereemoniously as unwanted guests who had created a disturbance in a public place—they were yanked to their feet by two Indians and thrown headlong out of the great wigwam.

Bruised, swollen, bleeding, they could only crawl, dragging their bodies, spurred by the fear that if they did not disappear fast enough they might be hauled back. It was days before either could walk without his legs buckling.

When Jack Evans came back from hunting, he found his dejected friend sitting in the river up to his shoulders, soaking his pain-racked body.

Said John, "I pitied you for being absent when the wonderful intelligence came about the English ship at the mouth of the river. But you were lucky: You missed the dance. And I have since discovered that adventurous English vessels sometimes trade with the French even in time of war."

"Never fret," said Jack cheerfully. "You are having your misfortunes in bits and pieces. When I have mine, I shall have a good one. But now I must hie myself off and feed some bones to Sergeant."

John Gyles was a quick learner. He had become as proficient in

the Maliseet tongue<sup>1</sup> as a tribesman, now he was picking up some Micmac words too. This was a peculiar, unintelligible language—a Maliseet could not understand a Micmac at all, although he found no difficulty in talking with the Passamaquoddies and Penobscots who lived in the direction of New England.

John learned also to divine—almost by a sixth sense—when a dance was imminent. If his intuition failed, someone usually tipped him off.

Not long after the Cape Sable visitation, he was dressing leather when a friendly Indian breathed in his ear, "Hasten! A dance is planned. They have found James Alexander; they are searching for you."

O-ski-tehin and his squaw hurried to him. "Flee!" urged his master. "Quick—run for your life into the swamp and hide."

John, though still lame, sprinted away and covered himself with brush in a swamp thicket.

Soon he heard hallooing and whooping all about. Sometimes the eager Indians, threshing the tall pointed green grass, passed frighteningly close.

"Chon!" one bellowed. "Come out, or you will be punished many times over!" Another yelled, "Chon, our good English friend! Come and you will not be hurt."

Chon wasn't having any. He remained as motionless as a hunted toad. He resolved that if discovered, he would bolt into the wilderness—far in—and they would have to be fast to catch him.

Finally there was silence, and he slept.

Poor James Alexander had a rough day. When at last he escaped, he plunged into the woods, and the Indians feared he had gone in search of the Mohawks. But James slunk back later when

<sup>1</sup> John discovered that although Maliseet was the name commonly applied to the St. John River tribe—some of the Frenchmen mistakenly pronounced it Marisset because they knew the Indians always substituted an *l* for an *r*—the Indians themselves didn't like the name at all. The reason: it was derived from *Malerejiik*, a derogative label hung on them by the Micmacs. Naturally the proud Micmacs thought their language was the one and only true Indian tongue; so they called the other tribe "the Broken Talkers"—and the name persisted. Mostly the Maliseets called their own people *Wulastukwiuk*—"the People of the Goodly River."

all was quiet, and John Gyles said, "gave a melancholy account of his sufferings."

It might be supposed that after such abuse the white captives would be broken in spirit. Yet, on a subsequent evening, John Gyles and James Alexander, by the use of imaginative ingenuity, got their own back and put the whole Maliseet settlement to rout.

Nobody could live long among the Maliseets without learning of their inbred dread of the Mohawks. A branch of the Iroquois allied to the English, the Mohawks were vicious fighters to the death—and, the Maliseets insisted, also cannibals. Although the Maliseets were fierce themselves when aroused to fever pitch, they had little appetite for tangling with an enemy who might not only kill them, which was bad enough, but also eat them, which was worse.

"It is indeed true," O-ski-tehin once told John. "They eat men with as much pleasure as Maliseets eat bear meat. Father Simon will swear I speak the truth. I have heard an Algonkin squaw tell a Jesuit how she and two other mothers were seized by a Mohawk war party, and their three babes were roasted on spits before their eyes and devoured. When the squaws screamed and sobbed, and strained at the ropes that bound them, the Mohawks laughed. The squaw told the Jesuit, 'They are not men—they are wolves!'"

Every time the Maliseet warriors at Meductic held a feast and took turns telling stories afterward about their prowess in battle, John Gyles noticed, the enemies whom they vanquished were not English but Mohawk. Every tale about a great ancestor warrior recounted how by strength, or skill, or clever stratagems he triumphed over a Mohawk—or a whole war party of Mohawks. He wrote:

The Maliseets often had terrible apprehensions of the incursions of those Indians. They are called also *Moganas*—a most ambitious, haughty and bloodthirsty people, from whom the other Indians take their measures and manners, and their modes and changes of dress, etc.

<sup>1</sup> The Récollet missionary of Meductic.

This was why Meductic had been laboriously built as a palisaded wooden fort—because the Maliseets feared not the English, but the Mohawks.

Growing up among the Indians, John Gyles had heard many times the story of the heroine Malabeam, the girl who saved Meductic.

A huge war party of five hundred Mohawks had paddled down from Canada toward the northern waters of the St. John River, intent on destroying the Maliseet stronghold.

On the Madawaska River shore they captured a small hunting group of Maliseets which included Malabeam, her husband, and children. All but Malabeam were put to death—she was spared on the promise she would guide them to Meductic.

Dutifully she warned her captors, as they neared the Little Falls of the Madawaska, they must halt to make a portage.

Thus by the time they embarked on the St. John River, assured by Malabeam there were no more rapids to fear, they trusted her.

The current being fast, the warriors lashed their canoes together side by side and drifted onward at a steady pace. The weary paddlers dozed. Only a few sentries kept vigil.

As night fell, a distant faint rumbling came to their ears. A sentry in the Mohawk chief's canoe asked Malabeam what it portended. She explained it was only a waterfall at the mouth of a river flowing into the St. John. Then, undetected, she slid over the side of her canoe into the water and struck out for shore.

In a few minutes a gathering roar of angry waters awakened the sleepers. They were being swept inexorably toward the brink of a cataract—*Checanetepeg*—the Destroying Giant—a tumultuous, seventy-four foot drop, one of the greatest waterfalls in North America.

Panic-stricken, the Mohawks paddled furiously but hopelessly. All five hundred plunged over the precipice to their death in the whirlpools far below.

It was against this background, then, when many Indians had gathered at the Meductic village, John and James Alexander were kept busy one hot day and night fetching water from a cold spring that ran out of a rocky hill about three-quarters of a mile from the fort. Lugging big iron kettles, they had to cross a large corn field,

then descend to a lower vale before climbing a hill. The hill seemed to get higher and higher.

"I have never known such drouthy people!" John commented, stopping to mop sweat from his brow with a ragged sleeve.

James Alexander nodded wearily. "I am nearly dead, myself, with this continual fatigue. They will keep us going till we drop." It was then that James Alexander had the inspiration and told John of his plan, first warning him, "I conjure you to secrecy, but I know you can keep counsel."

The next dark night, when James Alexander went for water he carefully set his kettle on the descent to the lower vale, then ran back pell-mell to the fort—"puffing and blowing as though in the utmost surprise," John Gyles related—and announced:

"I have seen Mohawks near the spring!"

He could not have precipitated greater alarm if he had touched off a cannon. Suddenly the whole village was alive, everyone shouting as Indians scurried to find families, and squaws sought husbands.

James Alexander's master was a courageous warrior.

"Show me," he demanded. "Show me the Mohawks."

They hurried off into the night. When they crept up to the brow of the hill, James Alexander pointed to distant silhouettes of tree stumps in the semi-darkness and at the same moment nudged the poised kettle with his toe.

"I saw them move," he whispered.

At first rolling silently down over moss, the unseen kettle soon began to sound ominously menacing, its bail clattering at every turn.

Without a word his master wheeled about and ran. James Alexander raced after him. They dashed into the village to find the forty Indians jumping into their canoes and paddling away—some up river, some down.

Wrote John Gyles:

They did not return under fifteen days; and then the heat of the weather being finally over, our hard service was abated for this season.

I never heard that the Indians understood the occasion of

their fright; but James and I had many a private laugh about it.<sup>1</sup>

Fir balsam for frozen feet, red ochre for stab wounds, and now, on a hunting expedition, John Gyles saw to his amazement O-ski-tchin minister to an Indian's broken bones merely by going to the plants and trees and soil about him for medications.

During a gale an old spruce tree had come crashing down, pinioning a hunter's right leg. He lay prostrate, pounding his fists on the ground in agony. After eight Indians lifted the tree trunk off, O-ski-tchin went to work as deliberately as a surgeon in Pemaquid. Using sphagnum moss as a swab, he cleaned the wound of blood and dried it with soft maple leaves.

Then he drew the ruptured skin together, sealed it with sticky fir balsam, and for a dressing dusted on light ash from charred cedar bark. A splint for the crushed leg was ready at hand—heavy bark stripped from a white pine. This, O-ski-tchin clamped tightly around the limb, tying it with Indian rope.

"The sap will help heal the wound and the bone," he reassured the victim.

But the man tossed and turned that night, getting no sleep. In the morning O-ski-tchin found some blood-root, steeped the root and made a tea which he forced down the patient's throat. Soon the Indian snored peacefully.

The following day he was hauled back to the village on a drag-sled of evergreen boughs—and when John Gyles next saw him, weeks afterward, he was walking around as if nothing had happened.

When John Gyles was first brought to Meductie, he had imagined the savages to be little more than animals—cruel, vain,

<sup>1</sup> The Maliseets' deep-rooted fear of the Mohawks lasted for a long time. A century later, in 1787, Rev. Frederick Dibblee received a quantity of Indian prayer books from the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and handed them out to the Maliseets on the St. John River. They handed them right back—because not only could they not understand the Mohawk language the books were written in, but if the Mohawks came, they would be suspicious of how the Maliseets got hold of their prayer books, and anything might happen.

Reverend Dibblee wrote to the English Society that the prayer books were unsuitable for the Maliseets and that accordingly, and thriftily, he had passed them out to the poor white settlers of his own parish.

treacherous, lazy, dirty, immoral, completely unskilled and untutored.

But living with them day by day, year by year, he had discovered they possessed many more virtues than their basic consideration for white women captives, which in itself put some civilized armies to shame. They had a strong integrity toward one another. They followed a strict moral code in relations between the sexes, and obeyed tribal laws. They loved light-hearted jokes, storytelling, singing, and laughter. They respected the animals of the wild. They were kind to their children and made them behave with exemplary courtesy toward their elders, even if at the same time they regarded their wives as chattels who should be grateful for the privilege of doing the hard work. And, after their fashion, they were able primitive doctors.

True, O-ski-tchin once admitted to him, the Maliseets made slaves out of white captives and other Indians; however, did not the white men make slaves out of other races?

"But torturing and burning at the stake!" John expostulated. "Is that not bestial? Do even animals thus comport themselves—except cats that torment birds and mice?"

O-ski-tchin shrugged.

"It is our way—we know no other. We treat as we are treated. Is it different to use the musket and the tomahawk and the crooked knife and the burning stake, if our white enemies use the musket and the big cannon, then turn us over to their Mohawks to burn?"

Not until one autumn when O-ski-tchin fell coughing and gravely ill in the wigwam did John Gyles realize that paradoxically, in a remote sort of way, he felt a fondness for this warrior who had been present at the murder of his father and who had hauled him into a woeful existence as a slave. Moreover, it made him suddenly aware that if O-ski-tchin died, he would be left without protection; he might be sold far up the St. John River, even as far away as Quebec, where any hope of escaping to the English in New England would be forever squelched.

O-ski-tchin's squaw hastily despatched him to get the first remedies that occurred to her mind—butternut bark, to boil for a physic; calla lily, whose powdered and smoked roots were a sovereign remedy for asthma and catarrh; goldenrod, whose leaves and flowers dried and steeped were efficacious for nausea; and

ginseng—"a small piece of the root steeped," she said, "is best for any disease."

All the time that he was picking the herbs and roots and bark, John Gyles worried about his fate if O-ski-tchin should die. He was twelve now; he feared he had frittered away valuable time; why had he never attempted to escape? He was lean and strong and possessed stamina beyond his age, he could paddle a canoe like a Maliseet youth. Why had he waited so long to make a break for freedom? He and another captive—James Alexander or even Jack Evans—could steal a swift birch-bark craft just as darkness descended and paddle at full tilt for Menagouche at the mouth of the St. John River.

By dint of great exertion, on the rolling spring fresher they could reach the Bay of Fundy by morning, secure in the knowledge that not until then would the tribe make discovery of their absence. Boldly they could strike out to sea, attired and dyed as Maliseet warriors to deceive the tribesmen at the river's mouth.

"Chon! Chon!" The squaw's anxious calls shattered John's reverie.

"Coming!" he shouted, climbing up the river bank.

O-ski-tchin, after his squaw's ministrations, still coughed and breathed labouriously. He was worsening.

By next morning squaws had gathered from near and far, as women will, offering well-intentioned counsel.

One insisted they should make a tea from the roots of lady's slipper, which was ideal for colds. Another was for steeping the bark of the black cherry, which as everyone knew provided a bitter tonic and a syrup that routed coughs, bronchitis, palpitation of the heart and indigestion. Still another helpfully brought moosewood—it would make a medicine good for anything.

A snaggle-toothed woman drew John Gyles aside.

"Your master has trust in you," she reminded him. "So you must get him sweetflag—musk rat root! Dig it up, steep it, let him drink it. Whatever his malady may be—disease, cold, stomach sickness, teeth, cholera, sore throat—it will cure him."

When John looked dubious, she quavered:

"Long ago a great sickness came on the Abenaki eastern tribes and a great many died—braves, squaws and children. One evening a curious being appeared—looking like a man, yet made up of

joints and branches. The stranger quoth: "I am Whis-wask (Musk-rat Root) and can restore you all. Dig me, steep me, drink me—I will make you well!" So saying, he vanished before their eyes. But the warrior did as instructed, and all were cured."

Other squaws were advocating the merits of beaver castors and of drinking from a bladder filled with seal oil, a medicine most Passamaquoddies kept hanging in their wigwams—but John was already off questing for sweetflag.

To the boy's disappointment, however, the squaw didn't give the muskrat root a fair chance. No sooner had O-ski-tchin with difficulty swallowed a liberal dose than she announced:

"This is a pestilence from across the seas. It is beyond the power of Maliseet herbs. I must call a medicine man!"

Within two days the medicine man came. He was a stranger, and John figured he must be a Penobscot. He was old and bent and withered, and serious of mien in keeping with the importance of his calling.

With him, like any doctor, he brought a medicine bag containing an array of evidently useful accessories—roots, bark, sticks, a cheap flute, a tin whistle, and a wood carving. For good measure he carried a drum and a rattle.

"What is that funny face in the wood?" John asked the squaw outside the wigwam flap.

"Shhhhhhh! That is the image of *Pu-hi-gun*."

"Who is that?"

"His spirit-helper. Every medicine man has one. It is an animal spirit which has helped him before. The medicine man can change himself into the animal when he wants to go spying."

The incantations started, slowly, solemnly.

<sup>1</sup> It was hardly surprising that Indians were so prone to suspect white men's afflictions. Countless tribesmen had fallen prey in this century to disease to which they had never had the opportunity to build up resistance. Most of their own medical knowledge had been based on ailments the tribesmen could normally expect—frozen or burned limbs, broken bones, sprains, rheumatism, respiratory diseases, sore eyes from smoky fires. Every Indian knew that after the first white explorers arrived in New England—for three or four years before the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620—a deadly visitation raged along the Atlantic coast from Penobscot to Narragansett Bay. Some tribes were nearly wiped out. The Massachusetts had shrunk from three thousand to three hundred warriors.

First the old Indian thumped the medicine drum—gently, then with a rhythmic beat.

"Through him the Sun is speaking," explained the squaw to John.

Now the medicine man was shaking his tortoise-shell rattle, accompanying it with a monotonous chant.

"Ah—now the moon too is speaking," said the squaw, obviously greatly pleased that he had managed to get both heavenly bodies talking.

The medicine man, as preoccupied as a cleric conducting a religious ritual, completely oblivious of the onlookers at the wigwam flap, leaned over the sweat-beaded brow of O-ski-tchin and blew hard as if he expected to blow the drops away.

"What is he doing now?" whispered John.

"It is the Wind blowing," said the squaw in a low voice. "Even as our own breath belongs to us, the Wind outdoors is the breath of the Great Spirit."

Now the ceremony was ending. The wrinkled practitioner was beckoning the squaw.

"It is not a pestilence from across the seas," he announced. "A powerful enemy has caused him sickness by working through his own *me-du-lin*."<sup>1</sup> "I have three *pu-hi-guns*—a weasel, a crow, and a wolverene. They tell me they have banished the wicked *me-du-lin* after a great battle."

"Then he will be cured?"

"On the second rising of the sun," replied the medicine man, collecting his rattle and drum and twigs. "When he opens his eyes, tell him I have spoken."

Astonishingly, within two days O-ski-tchin was sitting up and eating ravenously. In two days more he was taking short walks outside the wigwam, holding on to John's shoulder.

The Indian knew for certain now who had cast the wicked spell on him. He had seen it in a dream while he was delirious. It was a Penobscot with whom he had quarrelled over ownership of a captive the year before.

"In my vision I watched him boil seven needles and stick them in the side of his wigwam while he spoke threats against me,"

<sup>1</sup> Evil Spirit

recalled O-ski-tchin: "If the medicine man had not come, I would have died."

Many tribesmen came to see him and to marvel at the greatness of the three *pu-hi-guns*.

It left John Gyles baffled. Was there something, after all, in beneficent animal spirits? Or was O-ski-tchin healed by his implicit faith in the medicine man? Or—what seemed to the Puritan boy much more likely—had the affliction run its course?

There was a fourth answer; he was reminded when the shrivelled old squaw ambled by again.

"I would not speak ill of a medicine man," she said, munching a cornstalk on toothless gums; then, having safely hedged against the unknown, "but he was already getting better. It was the muskrat root tea!"

Beyond question, the boy realized, muskrat root had something. He had seen French settlers gathering it, and the few Frenchmen who lived along the river seemed to rely more often on Indian remedies than European.

Yet the power of the medicine man over the minds of the Maliseets was awe-inspiring. It was there, indisputable, even when the medicine man was not present.

There had been an occasion when an Indian woman helped O-ski-tchin's squaw change the wigwam interior around. The visitor exclaimed, "A spider is crawling up the pole!" and snatched for it but only grasped one leg, pulling it off.

"Ee-e-e-e-owwww!" shrieked the squaw at the other side of the wigwam, clasping her leg, and fell to the ground kicking spasmodically. "Quick—put medicine on me!"

There was a milkweed poultice handy, which the squaw had prepared for John Gyles' welts from the Cape Sable Indians. The visitor slapped it around the calf of the anguished leg. Almost immediately the victim was up again and well.

Was it just a cramp?

John Gyles assumed so. But the squaw had her own diagnosis: "The medicine man told me the spider was my *pu-hi-gun*. When she pulled off its leg, I felt it too."

Squatting and lending a hand with the cornmeal he was pounding, the squaw continued, "You must remember that every

albino creature has the power of *me-qu-lin*. Never kill one, not even a snowy owl."

"What could an owl do to me?"

"My uncle scorned the wise teachings and aimed his gun at one. The gun exploded in his face."

"But is it not better," John asked, "to seek the real medicines from the roots and the herbs than ask help of unseen spirits?"

The squaw looked surprised.

"White men ask help of unseen spirits too. I have seen you close your eyes, Chon, and bend your head and speak low, even if you do not go to the Mass of Father Simon. We Indians speak to the Frenchmen's Great Spirit, and to our own Great Spirit too. The herbs and the roots are a present to the Indians from our *ke-muk*,<sup>1</sup> so it is all the same power."

She told him then how the tribes first got their medicines. In the Long Ago, a young Indian woman gathering roots in the forest was captured by Mohawk scouts. As she was dragged away, she hid some root fibres in her bosom.

"The terrible Mohawks tortured her, placed her hand in the fire, but she did not cry out. Many days after, at the Mohawk village, the chiefs decided she should be burned.

"Yet the girl was so brave they did not wish to slay her, and they waited for another day. On that day, she even helped the squaws gather stumps for her own fire. Again they were struck with wonder, and decided to wait.

"Then a son was born to her, a very small baby, from the root fibres she had hidden in her bosom.

"The son, who had no human father, grew very fast, and a Mohawk family took the girl and the baby as their own. But one day the chiefs decided a captive must be burned, and chose the girl. Even though she did not wish to leave her son, she escaped and after many adventures reached her people in the Penobscot country.

"So mournful was the son, he would not talk but sat silently by the fire. Then a Mohawk baby died one morning, and another baby the next morning, and the Indians were greatly afraid. They

<sup>1</sup> Spirit Gods.

thought it was the magic of the son that was killing their babies, so they watched and saw him leave each night and return with a liver which he cooked.

"They approached him in great trembling, and spoke: 'We repent of our cruelty to your mother. What is it that you want of us? Do you wish to be our chief?' And he answered no, but agreed to lift his curse from their babies, and said: 'I shall lie on my side in this wigwam for one year, and then you will turn me over. Under me you will discover medicine plants growing that will bring your children health. I shall be the Father of all Indians, and you will call me by the name of Gwel B'hot."<sup>1</sup>

John was impressed by the savagery of the child-like tale. Later, hunting in the forest with Oski-tchin, he mentioned the eerie legend.

The big Indian stopped setting a snare, and motioned to John to sit down.

"My squaw is from the Penobscot land," he began, "and in the home of her forefathers she heard many wrong things. This is the true story.

"A young Indian maiden travelled often in the woods, picking herbs and roots but, after she bit off some bushes, a son was born to her. She was much alarmed, for the baby had no father. She wanted to slay the child, but could not do so.

"So she made a poor canoe of birch bark, put the baby in it, and pushed it out into the river to float away. The waves were very rough, yet the canoe did not rock. It sailed as on smooth water so that the child was not harmed, or even made wet by the waves.

"The canoe ran aground near an Indian settlement, and a squaw carried the baby to her wigwam. At once, every morning, an Indian baby was discovered dead causing the village great concern. Then a squaw saw the stranger-child walking to the river every night and returning with a tongue and roasting it.

"They argued whether to cut up the stranger-child and cast the pieces in the river, finally deciding it would be better to cut up the stranger-child and burn the pieces! This they did, and scattered the ashes on the river. Yet that night the stranger-child walked back into the village, carrying a tongue as before, and the next morning a baby was found dead.

<sup>1</sup> "Turn Over."

"Now the stranger-child said, 'I will do no more harm. He had grown swiftly, and was no longer a child. He did wondrous feats. He showed how he could take all the bones out of his body. Soon he could not move, as he was very fat and had no bones, so fat his eyes could not be seen.

"The Indians hastened to build him a fine wigwam, for they knew he was a great medicine man. He promised: 'I will grant any favour you ask,' and though the Indians moved away from the village, they came back often to make requests. When they asked him for medicine, he said, 'Turn me over and you will discover medicine beneath me.' And that is how the Indians found the herbs and roots for medicine."<sup>1</sup>

John said, "Thank you—now I will know."

He felt a little sorry for his master. An Indian husband could cuff his squaw around at will, as most of them did whenever they were displeased; but he could never beat the real truth into her if she firmly believed something else.

<sup>1</sup> Almost every common tree and plant played a role in Maliseet medicines. Poplar bark was steeped into a tea for emaciation, headache, impure blood, lack of appetite. Sarapilla root became a tonic for coughs, rheumatism, skin ailments. Tamarack bark, steeped with cherry bark, was for colds. Hunchberry, dried and steeped, was swallowed for fits and convulsions.

Not only was steeped hemlock bark good for colds and rheumatism, but the bitter astringent liquid applied externally reduced bruises, swellings and sprains. Cornmeal could stop bleeding, so could steeped Christmas fir roots, or puffball applied as a soft surgical dressing. Tassels of young corn ears relieved bladder and kidney troubles, as did also steeped pipisewa.

Nursing babies with sore mouths were given a tea made from alder bark, which also stopped cramps and retching. Mountain ash was a purgative. High bush cranberry tea helped swollen glands and mumps.

As a wash for sores or poison ivy, a Maliseet might steep the leaves, bark and berries of staghorn sumach; or the roots of wake robin (purple trillium); or pitcher plant swellings, sliced; or pussywillow roots ground into powder; or Jack-in-the-pulpit root.

Earache was treated by blowing in smoke from Indian tobacco (often shredded willow bark). Fayed nerves were eased by a tea made from bitter skullcap leaves. Spring tonic for the children always arrived on schedule with the season—fiddleheads, those delicious tender fern greens with tightly curled fronds.

A favourite poultice for rheumatism was blue flag, powdered. If aching joints persisted despite all the medications, then the only sure cure was to wear a wrist-band or ankle-band of dried eel skin.

## TO FATHER SIMON'S UNRULY CHILDREN

Father Simon looked upon his flock arranged in a great circle. A Récollet priest of the Franciscan order, he was missionary to the St. John River—"a gentleman of a humane and generous disposition," John Gyles wrote.

Now the good man had come back to Meductic after a long absence, and he was furious about the abuse of John Gyles and James Alexander at the hands of the Cape Sable Micmacs. Especially was he angry at the Meductic Indians for permitting this vicarious revenge.

"I have severely reprehended you many times for committing barbarities on captives." He snapped out the Maliseet words, and his knuckles showed white where his hands gripped the robe at his chest. "You say you are Christians—you have embraced the faith. You speak, but your actions belie your words. You have betrayed my trust."

Passive silence. If his listeners felt discomfited, they gave no sign. They looked bland and intent—much in fact like any other congregation, except that they wore blankets and flaps, were tanned and black-eyed, their hair was long, they were without hair on their faces, and they squatted rather than sat.

To John and Jack Evans, watching from the shrubbery, it was absorbing;—it was, nonetheless, an ordeal to Jack. For he had dared, this once, to bring his dog to the village, and Sergeant was wriggling strenuously, trying to break free from between his feet. Jack Evans feared that his playful pet would run straight for the missionary, whose robe was blowing free in the breeze.

John Gyles tried to deter the dog by bracing his moccasin across its chest, and Jack whispered, grinning, "The dog will bite you if

you kick him." But Sergeant looked far less interested in John than in getting a grip on that beautifully tempting loose robe. Finally Jack Evans grabbed Sergeant up and held him close, patting his head and keeping his nose pointed at the ceremony as if watching all the activity might hush him.

"Excepting their errors in religion," the priest went on vehemently, "the English are better people than yourselves. The Almighty thinks kindly of them, for He forgives the wayward who know no better. And He will remarkably punish the wretches who inflict tortures on them!"

The congregation looked rapt but unmoved.

Now the missionary delivered the thrust he had been saving: "God has already begun to execute his vengeance! One of the Cape Sable Indians got a splinter into his foot, which festered and rotted the flesh till it killed him. Another ran a fish-bone into her hand, and she rotted to death, notwithstanding all means that were used to prevent it. In various manners all have died, so not one of those two families lived to return to their village!"

Now there were tight-lipped frowns; the listeners were getting the message. Splinters and fish-bones were close enough to home to understand.

"While I am about it," continued the missionary, "there was an old squaw among you who outdid all others in cruelty to captives. She hauled young persons through the fire; she threw shovels of hot coals into the bosoms of other poor, naked, starving slaves.

"This squaw had a grandson of twelve years. When you dispersed to go hunting in the fall of last year, you strangely forgot their well-being. They were found dead in their wigwam months afterward. It does not matter if she was a squaw of evil temper, nor was her grandson to blame for her nature. It is a thing very uncommon for my Maliseet brethren to neglect either their old or young people."

This had less visible effect than the splinter or the fish-bone. The Indians knew why they let her die: no one liked her enough to care about her, nor her grandson for that matter.

Sometimes, in relaxed moments, Father Simon unburdened his mind to John Gyles—perhaps because there were no French settlers in Fort Meductic—and, of the English captives, only John and Jack Evans were now left. Some had died; others, including

James Alexander, had been sold to Indians far distant, and no more was heard of them. It was an unusual friendship. As John knew almost no French and the priest knew almost no English, they spoke in Maliseet, with fragments of English and French and Latin and much gesturing. And each, in his way, was guarded—for the missionary knew that John was a heretic, and John was convinced that Father Simon represented the devil, whom he feared more than the Indians.

"God will surely forgive us, his poor servants," the missionary remarked, "because we have to use devious methods to show these forest children the light." He shook his head wearily, lighting his pipe. "They love the mystery and splendour of our faith, because they are deeply superstitious by nature, and to them it is full of magic. But at times I despair of truly converting them—at least, some of them."

And he recalled incidents when the missionaries' ingenuity had been sorely tested:

Nearly a century before, when Champlain and de Monts voyaged to the New World in 1604 and named the St. John River, they were gratified by the avid religious interest shown by Chief Chkoudun, whom they found presiding over the palisaded village at the tortuous mouth of the big stream.

Chkoudun was always there, looking as solemn as an archbishop, when the French adventurers held Sunday religious observances. He wore the Sign of the Cross on his bosom and insisted that all his retinue do likewise. He drank in every word of the Mass—even though, knowing neither French nor Latin, he had not the slightest idea what was going on.

Later, however, when the missionaries and the Indians achieved some degree of understanding through words and sign talk, it was not always easy to convince the natives that this creed from across the seas made sense. They were, through hard necessity, practical people.

"This Place of Torment you tell us about," one Indian called out. "This hell—would not such a giant blaze soon use up all the wood in the forest near by? Would not the squaws have to travel farther and farther away to gather stumps? Does the Almighty have to move Hell to a better spot every so often?"

Father Jouvency, the missionary of that era, had an answer

The Almighty could always get fuel to keep the place going, because the soil itself in Hell would burn. As proof, he produced a chunk of earth-like substance—sulphur. When he put it in the campfire, the rising noxious fumes banished all doubts. It was Hell, all right.

Then another voice spoke out: "The Indians go not to Purgatory, but to their own Happy Hunting Ground!"

"No, my son," replied Father Jouvency, extending his arms toward them, "Indians go to Purgatory like the white men, for in God's eyes we are all brothers and all are treated the same." The Indian skeptic was unconvinced.

"I have seen the pictures in your book," he said, waving it aloft for all to see. "In Purgatory no one is wearing a feather; no Indians are there!"

With effort Father Jouvency managed to persuade him that the man who drew the picture had never seen Indians—it was only one man's conception of Purgatory, and not the true one.

Some Indians were quick to see the folly of the white man praying continually to the Almighty above.

"We are now Christians and we know there is a Master on high and a master below," the spokesman for one village solemnly informed the priest. "But we will not pray to Him on high, because you tell us he loves us and will do us no harm. We will pray to the master below that he may not ill-treat us and lay waste our cornfield."

Reminiscenced Father Simon, "It was sadly hard for the earliest missionaries. The task of translating was formidable. It was simple to find the expressions the Indians used for 'stick' and 'stone' and 'fire'; but to track down the native words for such unseen things as 'hope' or dream, or 'forget' was frustrating. We are still disputing, after all these years, whether they have a word exactly corresponding to 'credo'—I believe."

To find out these things, the first missionaries were obliged to amuse the Indians for a whole afternoon, playing the clown. They were compelled to make a thousand gesticulations and signs.

"These fine gentlemen often ridiculed instead of helping us; the Indians would deliberately give us wrong words—often the most abominable obscene Maliseet expressions. Then the missionary would go about innocently using these words in preaching

beautiful passages from the Gospels, and the Indians would scream with merriment, to the chagrin and puzzlement of the priest."

It was possibly due to the difficulties of communication, Father Simon explained, that when Chief Chkoudun journeyed to Port Royal in 1610 to be baptized, he had apparently been insufficiently prepared on some points of faith.

After the happy chieftain received the sacrament, he was congratulated on all sides. A French onlooker asked whether he was married, and Chkoudun proudly replied, "Oh yes, I have eight wives! Seven of them are sitting over there—they wanted to see the ceremony."

Father Simon paused to relight his pipe. Then he checked the baggage in his canoe, for it would soon be dusk and he must be paddling on his way downstream to a Frenchman's hut.

"Is it much easier for the clergy now?" asked John Gyles, lending him a hand into the craft with a heavy cut-of-moose meat.

"Only in some respects," said Father Simon; he was peering out to see whether the mid-river waves were choppy. "The languages have been bridged; most of the savages are converted. But it rests heavy upon our spirits when they forget—when they burn captives, when they talk to trees, when they say the thunder is their forefathers getting angry, and thunder is good because it takes bats out of people's hair, when they tell me the red mark on an infant's face is due to the mother being terrified by a spider seen from her bed, when they speak with all credulity about the existence of giants in the north, and water monsters and horned serpents, and 'little people' that enter their wigwams and sit down but do not talk."

"And this *me-du-lin*! One of my congregation today assured me his uncle possessed the sinister power. When a French storekeeper refused him credit, because he had no goods, or money, the uncle summoned his *me-du-lin* and went out to the forest and gathered an armful of wood chips. These he brought back, and to the storekeeper's eyes they now appeared as coins, and he gladly accepted them in full payment for wares."

The Maliseets could believe in the white man's religion as long as everything went along normally—then, suddenly confronted by a crisis, they turned instinctively to their own spirits.

In the autumn, a strange calamity swept Meductic. An Indian who had seemed in perfect health suddenly started to bleed at the mouth and nose; almost immediately he turned blue in spots. Within two or three hours he was dead. Another brave began to bleed—and then a squaw—and that night, a child. "This is a judgment!" O-ski-tchin declared. "It is the retribution of the Great Spirit on those who were so foolish as to cast their eyes on the strange Indians last year."

It had been at the same season a year ago that residents of the Maliseet village were frequently frightened by the appearance of unknown Indians paddling up and down the river. They were not friendly visitors; they did not speak. Nor were they enemies; they did not attack. It could only be a portent that some disaster was coming.

Now it had descended—and as both of the first two victims were Indians who had seen the ghosts, the reason for their death was obvious.

"We must leave," O-ski-tchin told John. "Help the squaw to load the canoe."

It was a long time before the tribe returned to Meductic. Meanwhile more than one hundred Indians, including the chief of the St. John River, had fallen prey to the Great Spirit's punishment.

But at least, when the Indians scattered it was harder for the fur traders to find them, and to John's mind this was a compensating blessing from Providence; he hated to see the Indians taken advantage of and corrupted. As he wrote later:

Before they thus deserted the village, when they came in from hunting, they would be drunk and fight for several days and nights together, till they had spent most of their skins in wine and brandy, which was brought to the village by a Frenchman called Monsieur Sigénioncour.

Not all the Maliseets had been brought over to the Catholic faith. Some still openly practised rites in which they said demons participated. Just before a hunting expedition it was their custom to inquire of the devil what success they could expect.

John and Jack were to be taken on a winter hunting trip with the pagan Indians. Both were anxious to watch this invoking of the devil.

"No," said a friendly squaw. "I cannot tell you what is done at the fiendish ceremonies, for I have never joined in their hunting pow-wow. But I know that if they found you setting eyes on them, they would kill you."

"We would still like to watch," John said.

She shook her head from side to side, emphatically. "When I was a young girl, I knew an Indian boy who ventured to look upon the ritual. He was never seen again. They said he was taken away by a Hairy Man. If you go, the Hairy Man will get you too."

"We are not afraid of the Hairy Man," answered John. And off they went.

Lying on their stomachs in the darkness, the boys wriggled through the shrubbery toward a small hut, made of skins and mats. Within, a fire was heating large stones.

They saw two braves carry in a large vessel of water and pour it on the rocks—raising such a thick steam that a third Indian standing outside the hut was obliged to keep lifting and lowering a mat flap to prevent them from suffocating.

Strange noises and yellings emanated from the hut—the steam poured out like fire—but still no demons appeared.

For nearly three hours the boys watched and listened, so close they dared not lift their chins from the ground. Then they crawled back, disappointed, and told the squaw. She was much relieved that they had not been carried away into the spirit world.

An Indian brave, petersing, returned to the wigwam.

"There are likely signs," he announced. "But there are also dark clouds—it will not be such good hunting as on other trips."

And strangely enough, although they had some luck with small game, the larger animals eluded them.

One afternoon a moose splashed past them only a few rods away, the wavelets rocking the light craft.

Several Indians shot at him and missed; the moose thundered into the underbrush to the south. This disconcerted them. One shouted: "I will try to fetch you back for all your haste!"

Erecting two wigwams on a sandy point in the river, the Malisets pow-wow'd most of the night, beseeching the devil to guide them to the moose.

In the morning, to their astonishment, they found tracks of a moose all around the wigwams—though, as John Gyles wrote,

"We did not see or taste it."

This only confirmed the Indians' belief that the Great Spirit was tantalizing them and that the trip would surely come to no good.

Even John Gyles, in spite of his Puritan faith, seemed unconsciously swayed by their convictions. He wrote: "I am of opinion that the devil is permitted to humour those unhappy wretches sometimes."

Soon afterward, John's canoe party went back to the village with a modest haul of pelts—beavers, foxes and bear.

He waited expectantly—days, and then weeks—for the other Indians to return.

When at last they came in view, John Gyles was one of the first to greet the hunters, standing on the river bank.

One canoe, then the second canoe.

No sign of Jack Evans.

John sought the leader of the party, the surly Indian youth Sa-pa-tis.

"What of Jack? Where is Jack Evans?"

Sa-pa-tis brushed past roughly.

"Where is Jack?"

Two more Indians went by.

John Gyles grew frantic. He ran to the second canoe, recognizing an Indian he knew, a relative of O-ski-tchin.

"What is delaying Jack?"

The Indian paused a long time. Then, without trace of emotion, he explained.

Jack Evans was carrying a heavy burden on his back. He was weak from long fasting without game, as they all were. A gale was blowing hard.

Descending from an upland over ice, which was very hollow, Jack broke through, fell down, cutting his knee badly. Nonetheless he manfully tried to keep going, urging his dog to catch up. But the cold north wind was bludgeoning him. His legs were plunging ever more slowly into the snow.

"Wait for me!" he called to the Indians. "Un-ko-wuts!" ("I am cold!")

But sore beset themselves by the cold, they plodded on. Sleet was now falling—a freezing icy sleet. Every Indian passed him by, without heeding the pleas whipped back over his head by the gale.

The last anyone remembered of him, he was sitting on an ice ledge, legs immersed in water, holding out his arms to them helplessly.

Some Indians walked back the next morning either to find him or retrieve his bulging pack.

They found Jolly Jack still sitting on the ledge, encased in ice like a sculpture, looking sightlessly ahead—frozen dead. In his arms was a little white dog, also frozen dead.

## I I ROMANCE AMONG THE SAVAGES

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Kat-lin, the elder sister of Mal-lee, had become betrothed.

It was shy courtship. It began from a discreet distance. In the Egg Laying Moon (April), a strikingly handsome young brave could be seen walking by her wigwam, pausing briefly to talk self-consciously, then going on his way. If Kat-lin noticed that he passed by unnaturally often she gave no sign, but went on stringing wampum belts; her mother had taught her to be skilful at crafts. Then came the Gaspereaux Moon (May), and the young Indian would come up by canoe from his village, and he would wave to Kat-lin. Soon they would be paddling and you could hear her soft laughter rippling across the calm evening water.

"I am sure he will ask her to be his squaw!" Mal-lee confided to John one day, as excited as any younger sister would be.

"Then why," asked John, "does he not ask her?" He busily fitted a patch of birch bark over a rock-gouged hole in the bottom of his upturned canoe.

"Because the missionary has been away such a long time," sighed Mal-lee. "The young man must wait to be advised by his relations and Father Simon."

"They all must approve of the girl?"

"Yes, Chon—but I am sure they will like Kat-lin. I think that is why he is away these weeks—he is trying to find Father Simon; we hear the father is sick somewhere far down the river."

The Indian swain had a long wait—all through Feather Shedding Moon and Moose-Calling Moon and most of Salmon-Spawning Moon; and then, in late October, a wan-looking Father Simon was paddled to Medicine.

The consultations must have been swift, for Mal-lee eagerly

brought John the news: The young man had proposed.

"On bended knee?" asked John, using his hatchet to trim a strip of wood for a canoe rib. "Or did he just drag her off?"

Mal-lee looked horrified.

"He did it the right way, Chon—the Wulastukwiuk way! It was very beautiful." She paused at the thought, and her eyes shone. "He came into the wigwam where she was, and looked on her. Then, liking her appearance, he tossed a little stick into her lap.

"Kat-lin picked up the stick and looked at it in surprise, as if wondering whence it came. She glanced sideways at him, very modestly, to view the person who threw it. Then, liking him, she threw the stick back to him with a smile. Now all that is left is for Father Simon to hold the ceremony."

"What would Kat-lin have done," John asked, "if she glanced over and saw it was the wrong suitor?"

"Then she would toss the stick aside, and with an angry countenance walk out of the wigwam, and he would come there no more."

John shrugged. The only wonder to him was that more Indian maidens did not seize the chance to walk out with an angry countenance—because a squaw, once the wedding knot was tied, became at best a slightly superior type of slave.

She built cabins, carried water, collected wood, set campfires, cooked food, tanned game, sewed canoes, stretched skins, made clothes and moccasins, tended fish traps, paddled and-poled canoes, laced snowshoes. And if she had been tutored by her mother in feminine graces she also strung wampum belts, made monoodah (Indian bags), and fashioned dishes out of birch bark, sewing them so expertly with fine fir rootlets that they would not leak. These, and many other wifely chores, were all she had to do; the braves took the full responsibility for hunting, raiding, killing, feasting and story-telling—and also for properly disciplining their squaws with sound beatings.

"You do not wish Kat-lin happiness?" Mal-lee asked. She sounded piqued.

"Oh, yes! I respect her as a lady of many accomplishments. Tell Kat-lin I wish her a joyous life."

But his thoughts were on the dutiful squaws he had seen all these years, working their hearts out while their husbands crouched

over *al-te-sta-gen*, a dice game, sometimes for days and nights on end. The game was played with a wooden bowl made from a burl which the Indians thought was imbued with magical powers. The six dice were discs of bone, marked on the flat side. They were placed on the plate which, held in both hands, was hit suddenly on the ground to cause the discs to fly in the air. The score was tallied after each throw; the winner accordingly taking the right number of counting sticks from the pile.

Father Simon often preached scathingly about this game, saying it was a sin for the Indians to stake and lose all their possessions. But *al-te-sta-gen* lost no popularity.

"The elders say," Mal-lee broke in gently, "no captive has remained among us as long as you. Some day you may not be a slave, but a Wulastukw warrior. Then you would wish a squaw, would you not?"

John kept shaving the cedar strip methodically, but he was not looking at it.

"If Indian parents have a daughter who is comely and marriageable," Mal-lee continued, "they seek a husband for her who is a good hunter. He would need to have many useful things—a gun and ammunition, a canoe, a spear, a hatchet, a monoodah, a crooked-knife, looking-glass and paint, a pipe, tobacco, and a knot bowl to throw dice in.

"They would naturally hope for a good hunter, because the newly married Indian gives everything he procures in the first year to his wife's parents."

"I am not planning ever to marry," John remonstrated, then was suddenly sorry he said it.

But Mal-lee was continuing, "There is an old story of a Wulastukwiuk family which had a lovely daughter, adorned with a fine Indian education. She was so charming and gracious, they could not find her a suitable consort.

"One day when this family were residing upon the head of Penobscot River, under the White Hills called Ted-don, this beautiful creature was missing.

"After much time and pains spent, and tears showered in quest of her, they saw her diverting herself with a beautiful young man whose hair, like her own, flowed down below his waist. They were

swimming and washing in the waters of the river, but they vanished on their approach.

"They knew then this beautiful youth must be one of the kind spirits who inhabit the Ted-don, and they looked on him as their son-in-law. So according to their custom they called out to him for whatever creature of the wilderness they wished. The father would shout, 'I want a moose, my son-in-law!' and the animal would emerge from the forest and come swimming to him. Then he would call out, 'I want a bear, my son-in-law!' and a bear would come swimming to his side. All he had to do was signify his desire.

"The Ted-don are well known to have magic powers," she persisted. "I have heard an Indian say he lived by the river, at the foot of the Ted-don, the top of which he could see through the hole in his wigwam left for the smoke to pass out. He was tempted to travel to them, and set out on a summer morning and laboured hard in ascending the hills all day—and the top still seemed as distant as from the wigwam where he began his journey! He now knew the spirits were there, and never dared to make a second attempt.

"Once three young Indians attempted to climb toward the summit—and after three days and a half they were strangely disordered with delirium. When their minds became clear, they discovered they were returned by one day's journey! How they came to be thus transported they could not imagine—unless the genius of the Ted-don conveyed them."

Mal-lee tripped away, evidently happy in the belief she had given John something to think about.

He already knew, of course, a little of the Indian customs. He knew, for instance, it would be a considerable interval before Mal-lee became an aunt. For the first year of Maliseet marriage was more like a continued betrothal. He wrote: "If a young pair have a child within a year and nine months, they are thought to be very forward and libidinous persons."

He also knew that an Indian couple never despaired if their marriage at first appeared to be childless. The medicine man made a tea out of gold-thread plant, chanted a few mysterious words, the squaw poured the potion into a horn cup and placed it near her bed. Then she waited in the darkness, sometimes for hours, until

she heard a *plop* in the medicine cup whereupon she hurriedly drank it down. The squaws were convinced this worked.

Equipped for any household problem, the medicine man even had a brew for husbands who were too amorous! Pussywillow tea usually quieted them down.

John noticed that bereft Maliseets were not expected to grieve over-long. Replenishment of the tribe was too badly needed. He recalled:

In a still evening, after her husband dies, a squaw will walk on the highest land near her abode, and with a loud and mournful voice will exclaim, "*Oh! Hawe, hawe, hawe*" with a long mournful tone to each "*hawe*," for a long time altogether. After the mourning season is over, the relations of the deceased make a feast to wipe off tears, and the bereaved may marry freely.

If the deceased was a squaw, the relations consult together and choose a squaw (doubtless a widow) and send her to the widower, and if he likes her he takes her to be his wife; if not, he sends her back, and the relations choose and send till they find one that he approves of.

John's thoughts were suddenly interrupted. O-ski-tchin had come down to the beach; and he sensed from his master's pre-occupied manner that he was troubled and had something to tell him.

"I have tidings for you," the brave announced. "We will go hunting tomorrow, and we will talk."

The next morning, they paddled many miles upstream and squatted on the shore to eat before following bear tracks up a sandy track.

Characteristically, O-ski-tchin was deliberate about choosing the time. First he pointed to an eagle's nest on a distant hilltop crag and told him an Indian boy was once carried away by a Gullowia, a monster bird that built its nest on a high rock of a mountain. The lad, only eight, hunting with bow and arrow at the foot of the mountain, was wafted up in the sky and dropped into the nest as food for her brood. Terrified, lying flat on his face, he noticed that two great young birds in the nest had much fish and meat to feed on. Finally the mother bird, seeing that they would

not eat the boy, seized him again in her talons and glided back down into the valley, depositing him where she had found him.

"I have seen that very mountain," John said quietly. "I have passed near it in a canoe, and the Indians have told me. There is the nest of the great bird that bore away the boy. It appeared to be a great number of sticks put together like a nest, on the top of the mountain. And then we saw a very large bird—speckled like an eagle, but greater—and the Indians said, 'There is the bird, but she is now as a small child to the giant she was in long-ago days.'"

O-ski-tchin nodded, stirring the fire. He did not seem to be taken aback, as John half expected, by his slave bettering him on his own story.

"This, then, you have not seen," the Indian commented. "I know a young Indian who was belated in his hunting and, losing his way, found himself suddenly in what he thought was a large wigwam. But it was a beaver's house, full of dried cells. There he lived until the spring of the year, when he was turned out of the house, and being set upon a beaver's dam, went home and related to his friends what happened."

Then, abruptly—

"You had a brother, Chon. He was seized with you at Pem-aquid."

"Yes—James! Have you word of him?"

"He is dead." The Indian told him matter-of-factly. He had heard it from a Penobscot just two days ago. Two youths—James Gyles and another Englishman, seized at Casco Bay—had escaped after three years' captivity. They were overtaken by the Indians at New Harbor (only two miles from home! John thought sadly) and brought back to Penobscot fort.

"And they slew my brother?"

O-ski-tchin, betraying no feeling, spared him nothing. He merely stated the truth. The Penobscots had tortured the pair by fire for some time; then their noses and ears were cut off, and they were made to eat them. After that they were burned to death at the stake while the Indians declaimed loudly, "All deserters will be served in the same manner."

John Gyles was too numbed by grief and horror to observe that O-ski-tchin still had something to say, something, to him, even more important. Then he came out with it:

"Chon, I have sold you to Husa. I have sold you because I am going to move with my squaw to Canada, and you are better to live here than in such a far-off land."

For a fleeting moment the thought struck John that O-ski-tchin was being considerate—that his master wanted him to stay in Acadia where some day, by some great miracle, he might be recaptured by the English or traded to his own people. But then grief for his brother, and despair and resentment, washed the thought away. He had never hated O-ski-tchin so much, not even that fateful afternoon at Pem-aquid.

The next morning, he gathered together his meagre belongings from the wigwam, and, with a perfunctory goodbye to O-ski-tchin and his squaw, and without thanks for their good treatment of him, tramped through the village with chin held high to seek out Husa's wigwam.

Husa was a sickly Indian. It was no wonder he needed a slave as well as a squaw for looking after the meals and fires and collecting the medicinal herbs and roots kept both busy. By now John was hardened to work—he was strong and slim and would be fifteen this spring. His only regret was that he never had an opportunity to go hunting or fishing with this master, and only rarely to paddle a canoe.

He saw more now of Mal-lee than before. For it often happened that she was passing by just as he was setting forth to harvest herbs for medicine, and her mission was never so urgent that she could not spare time to help dig in the rich humus and strip bark from the trees. She often came to assist in caring for Husa, too. The ailing Indian took this as a personal compliment, and it seemed to do more to revive his spirits than the potions.

But John was obsessed these days with only one thought—escape. It pressed so on his mind that sometimes he hardly knew Mal-lee was there, much as Husa was grateful for her ministrations. If his brother James could plan an escape, and almost succeed in it, then why could he not make an attempt? Was he less brave than his brother?

One evening, hearing that an expedition against the English was in the offing, he went to the pow-wow, feeling it would do no harm to let his interest be seen, even if as a slave he had to stand outside the great wigwam. The more the Indians were made to feel he was one of them, the less they would suspect him of planning an escape.

It was a traditional dog-feast preliminary to going on the war-path. The boiled dog meat was passed around. One head had been

preserved intact, fastened atop a stick like an emblem, after being scorched so that the nose and lips shrank from the teeth, leaving them bare and grinning.

The Indian chief in charge of the impending foray took the dog head in his hands and started a warlike chanting song.

"We attack Saco," he intoned. "We slay the chief citizen, Jonathan Temple."

His head and body bobbed rhythmically in cadence with the song. The squatting warriors, nodding, were soon moving and shaking in unison with him.

"Within a few sunrises, I will carry Jonathan Temple's head and scalp in my hands, even as I carry this head."

Obediently the warriors nodded and bobbed.

Suddenly the song of menace ended. The chief slowly turned the grinning dog's head, until it was looking straight at a well-muscled warrior. This invited him to be his second in command.

John Gyles wrote:

If he accepts, he takes the head in his hands and sings. But if he refuses to go, he turns the teeth to another; and thus from one to another till they have enlisted their company.

The Indians imagine that dog's flesh makes them bold and courageous. I have seen an Indian split a dog's head with a hatchet, take out the brains hot, and eat them raw with the blood running down his jaws.

To John's chagrin, after the pow-wow not even the hangers-on took any notice of him. Stand erect and purposeful as he might, he was just Chon, the slave boy and the excited braves leaving the wigwam pushed him aside into the wet grass.

But he had little time to feel ignored. Events were now tumbling down about his ears with bewildering speed.

Only a few days later his new master died and was placed in his grave, along with his pipe and tobacco, his bow and quiver of arrows, his dice, bowl, looking-glass, and his two scalps amid much wailing by his relatives.

That night, shots were fired into the air outside many wigwams, in order to put to flight the shade of the dead man.

John Gyles now became the centre of a heated controversy. Was he the property of the widow—or did his ownership revert to his

first master? O-ski-tchin had unexpectedly arrived back after months of absence, and he pressed his claim. Husa's widow argued back. Both had their vociferous supporters in Meductie.

When the two claimants chanced to meet face to face in the village, an explosive dispute broke out—John, carrying wood a step behind the squaw, felt embarrassed, then fearful.

"Even as the wigwam and canoe of Husa are now mine," declaimed the irate widow, "Chon belongs to me!"

O-ski-tchin contradicted: "By the ancient law of our forefathers, I claim the boy to be my own again!"

In an atmosphere of gathering tension, spectators crowded in on them, muttering, spoiling for trouble.

"The slave is causing enmity between you!" said one brave. "Get rid of him and you will fight no more."

"Kill him!" shouted another, drawing his crooked knife. "Kill the trouble-maker!"

The lithe figure of a girl broke away from the fringe of the crowd and raced to the wigwam, where Father Simon had been administering the last rites to an ailing grandmother.

"Father—come quick!" gasped Mal-lee, wild-eyed. "They are going to kill Chon!"

Within moments the girl was seen sprinting back, followed by a puffing missionary with brown robes flapping about his bare legs.

"Hear me!" cried the good man, panting, as he thrust his way between the contestants. "You are about to commit a heinous crime, can you not see? This boy has harmed no one."

For an instant the murmuring throng paused. Father Simon groped for inspiration.

"Why not," he asked, "sell the slave to the French?—then both of you can divide the money and neither of you will have trouble!"

The sudden thought had an almost magical effect. The widow promptly agreed. O-ski-tchin nodded assent. The crowd quieted.

Everyone was satisfied—except John who could hardly believe his ears. To be traded off to the French, to the alien race his mother in her parting words had warned against, who could ruin him not only in body but also in soul!

He stood paralyzed, incredulous, and O-ski-tchin came and placed a hand on his arm.

"It is yet better for you, Chon. You will be with white people. Some day...."

The boy could not bring himself to reply, and O-ski-tchin, after a moment, dropped his arm and went on his way.

With unconcealed eagerness the Malisect tribesmen looked forward to selling their white slave. He would provide a useful item of barter when they journeyed sixty leagues downstream to greet the annual visit of a French ship with supplies for Fort Meductie.

Soon word came up the river that a man-of-war was nearing Menagouche.

Forty Indians and Father Simon hurriedly piled into canoes, together with John and his few possessions. Ignoring the admonitions of O-ski-tchin at the stern paddle as they pushed off, John arose and waved vigorously at a lone figure on the cliff overlooking the shore. The girl waved back wanly, then cast down her gaze. His last view of her was a tiny silent silhouette beside the pines in a setting sun.

At the campfire on a sandy headland that night, John Gyles stayed aloof from both O-ski-tchin and Father Simon. He could forgive neither and in his distressed mind it mattered little that the friar had saved his life. He felt as helpless as a canoe adrift in treacherous eddies without a paddler.

When he felt a hand touch his shoulder, he turned quickly, expecting to see his Malisect master. But it was Father Simon.

"I know you are sorely vexed, my son," he said, seating himself beside John but first carefully bunching his robe under him against the cold damp shore. "Mal-lee has told me. You feel buffeted about; you feel injured by your old master. Let me say only this: What you think of as stony-heartedness may be the opposite. Your master wishes to see you with your own kind—the French."

"They are not my own kind," John burst forth in anger. "They are Papists, followers of a false religion. What have the French done for the Indians in Acadia? They have brought them rum and infection. They have brought them necessities they didn't even know they needed. They let them torture their victims and burn them at the stake. The French are not my kind—I had rather, far rather, stay with the Malisects."

Father Simon filled his pipe deliberately, then lit it.

"If you went home today you find Puritans in New England burning their neighbours at the stake as witches. There is no religion which is totally tolerant, John, no race without faults. We can only do our best, each one of us, as individuals."

"And what has your best done for the Indians?"

"You have suffered at their hands," he said.

"Yes—and my father was murdered, at Pemaquid six years ago—and my brother tormented and burned."

The missionary nodded. "There was needless killing that day. But no one would have lived—including you, John—if Father Thury had not persuaded the chiefs to smash the rum casks in your fort cellar, lest the warriors go berserk."

John was little impressed, for his life had too often hung by a thread.

"You will perhaps not believe," said Father Simon, "that before the white man came, these aborigines were even more cruel."

"How could that be possible? The Indians did not even take scalps before the white soldiers came and offered bounties for them."

Father Simon shook his head in protest. "It is an oft-repeated myth. Cartier saw scalps hanging at Quebec in 1535."

"Then how have you tempered their barbarity?"

"In the past, each Indian had several wives; when he died, two or three squaws, and at least one of his children were buried alive with the body."

"So now the Indian family lives," John said, "but my family dies instead."

Father Simon did not appear to hear. He was gazing out on a mile-wide expanse of shimmering water.

"We have also stopped the wars among the eastern tribes," he said. "Now the Malisets and Micmacs live in peace together, and with their Indian neighbours. This was not always so."

John could not help but think to himself how little, really, the ferocity of the Indians when aroused had been abated by religion. Perhaps the friar had never attended a pow-wow and dog feast before a raid.

John answered, "It is commendable to stop the Indians from

killing each other. But when will your vaunted Roman Catholic religion stop the Indians from killing white men?"

Father Simon drew thoughtfully on his pipe for several moments. "That day will come," he said slowly, "when the white men stop killing Indians—and each other."

The arrival of the man-of-war was an event jubilantly awaited by the Indians for hundreds of miles around. In addition to provisions for the Acadian settlers, the ship always brought gifts and trading goods for the savages—guns and bayonets, powder and lead, shirts and blankets, gaudy ribbons and trinkets, plumed and lace hats, steel needles to replace the aboriginal dull stone bodkins, iron kettles to replace the rough wooden and birch-bark kitchen vessels.

John marvelled at the broadening vista of the great forest-lined river<sup>1</sup> as they skimmed downward—surely, he thought, the most magnificent wonder of nature other than the oceans themselves. And then, after climbing a hilly portage past the gorge of the seething, roiling rapids<sup>2</sup> near the river's mouth—a cataclysmic spectacle, where he saw an upended log ceaselessly lurching around in a great whirlpool, and Indians on shore shooting arrows into it laden with bags of tobacco to assuage the angry spirits—they descended to the harbour of Menagouèche. There the French war-ship lay snug at anchor in a cove.

As they neared the man-of-war it seemed to loom ever higher out of the water, higher than the tallest council wigwam—until as the canoe nudged its bulging hull the ship towered above them like the smooth rounded face of a stone cliff.

In spirit as well as in physique, John Gyles felt dwarfed, for he had caught a dazzling glimpse of officers looking down over the rail—men clothed in colourful uniforms, in grand finery he could hardly remember from the dim past.

A heavy rope ladder plummeted down, and they climbed up to the tune of Father Simon's laborious puffing.

<sup>1</sup> *Sieur de la Mothe Cadillac*, founder of Detroit, who had visited Meductic in 1692, called it "the most beautiful, the most navigable, the richest river of Acadia, with its many varieties of trees, including grapes." Of the Malisets he wrote, "They are well built and excellent hunters."

<sup>2</sup> *The Reversing Falls*.

Father Simon and the Indians went into the great cabin. John heard the muffled voices of the officers in turn speaking in French; and Father Simon replying with equal cordiality, judging from the exclamations and hand-clapping. Then Father Simon repeated the entire exchange to the Indians in Maliseet, narrating the riches and victories of the French monarch and his warm affection for them, and helping the officers to hand-out to every Indian a bag or two of flour and some prunes as ingredients for a feast. Then came the moment John dreaded: he was called in to be put on display. He wrote:

I who was dressed up in an old greasy blanket, without cap, hat or shirt (for I had had no shirt for the six years except the one I had on at the time I was made prisoner) was invited into the great cabin, where many well-dressed gentlemen were sitting, who would fain have a full view of me.

I endeavoured to hide myself behind the hangings, for I was much ashamed, thinking how I had once worn clothes, and of my living with people who could rig as well as the best of them.

When the interest of the assemblage turned to other things, O-ski-tchin showed John unexpected kindness.

"Tell me, Chon," he said in a quiet aside. "Do you choose to be sold to the people of the man-of-war, or to the inhabitants of the country?"

"I should be glad if you would sell me to the English from whom I was taken; but if I must be sold to the French, I would prefer to be sold to the lowest inhabitants of the river, or those nearest to the sea." He was certain that if he were traded to the warship he would never be able to return home.

He still did not know his fate when he was motioned into another cabin with rough-hewn long tables, and French sailors brought him beefsteak and potatoes on a pottery plate. Notwithstanding his despair, he ate heartily, gobbling up several slices of bread and putting salt on his meal plentifully, for it was the first time in six years he had seen either.

When O-ski-tchin left the man-of-war he bade John come too, for he was not sold.

After a few days they started up-river again, and stopped overnight at a Frenchman's estate at a place called *Iemseg* (Great Marshes), where a small river of that name linked a vast lake with the St. John stream.

John was lodged in a shed. Before long a well-attired Frenchman came out and addressed him pleasantly in Maliseet—for the man knew no English and the boy very little French—and then beckoned him into the kitchen of the home.

There stood a Frenchwoman, tall and pretty and slender; and John could hear small children talking in another room. She looked at John and then, smiling, glanced to her husband and said a few quick words John could not hear.

Going over to the kitchen table and rearranging some plates, she turned to John:

"*Ku-to-pi-pun*" ("You and I are hungry. *Un-mis-mis*" (I am eating; eat with me").

Slowly John walked to the table. At her urging he sat down. But he had neither the appetite nor the inclination to pick up knife and fork and eat the plateful of fish and corn.

She asked him brightly, "*Uk-ti-yu-wa ul-un-us?*" ("Have you a dog?") He did not answer.

Finally the Frenchwoman said to John, with a nod toward her husband, "*Un-tu-kwe-tchi-mais o-mit-sin*" (I will ask him to eat"). She spoke rapidly in French, and the man with a sigh came over and sat down too.

Though they chatted to John in Maliseet, he could neither reply nor raise his eyes, for he was afraid tears would overcome him. The man eventually rose and went out of the kitchen; but his wife, mystified, seemed determined to fathom the riddle of the mute English boy.

She came around the table and, taking John's hands in hers, looked into his eyes and said, "*Ke-kw-we-tchi-skut mir sin-nus?*" ("Why did you not eat?")

He could only shake his head, and look down. Then, noticing O-ski-tchin waiting outside the kitchen doorway, he hurried out to go with him.

While Father Simon and O-ski-tchin remained with Louis d'Amours, the Sieur de Chauffours, the man who had provided

them shelter, John was sent six leagues farther up river the next day to a second French house.

But just as he was getting braced for another appraisal, Father Simon unexpectedly came up from the beach, leaning heavily on a walking-staff. He obviously had tidings he could hardly wait to impart.

"Now," he announced enthusiastically, "you are one of us. For you are sold to that gentleman by whom you were entertained."

So the worst had come to pass.

"Sold!—to a Frenchman!" The thought shocked the boy.

He fled into the woods, leaving the missionary agape, and flung himself to the ground in inconsolable grief. Tumbling through his mind were thoughts of his parents, their Puritan faith, and especially his mother's last words. Now at long last—now when he was captured, not when his father was slain, not when he heard of his brother's agonized death, not when O-ski-tchin traded him—but now that he was delivered into the hands of "a people of that persuasion which my dear mother so much detested," his heart broke.

It was nearly dark when John emerged. He had wiped his eyes and surveyed his face in a pool, but even its poor mirror told him the lids were swollen as if he had been in a bout of fisticuffs.

Father Simon was standing almost where he had left him, contemplating the wilderness with hands folded behind his robes. He immediately perceived the situation, even if he could not understand it.

He took the boy to one side, out of the hearing of the Indians.

"I bid you not to grieve, John," he said. "This gentleman will not ill-treat you. He is of good humour; and he formerly bought two captives, both of whom he later sent to Boston." The missionary went on earnestly, "But even if he should so desire to do, I do not suppose you would ever wish to go back to the English, for the French religion is so much better."

John was silent.

"Let me assure you," said Father Simon, "I shall pass this way again in about ten days, and if you do not like to live with the

<sup>1</sup> The home of de Chauffours' brother Mathieu, Sieur de Frencuse, opposite the mouth of the Oronto. The de Chauffours had married sisters: Mathieu's wife was Louise Guyon de Frencuse, originally of Quebec.

French better than with the Indians. I will buy you back again."

John thanked him gladly.

Two bark canoes—their occupants waving *adieu* to one another—set their prows in opposite directions the following morning. Father Simon and O-ski-tchin headed far up stream toward Meductic; John Gyles and an Indian paddler glided the short distance down to Jemseg.

The Sieur de Chauffours was there on the jetty to hoist John by his hands out of the bow seat. "You are very welcome," said the seigneur in Maliseet. "But even before I show you your quarters, Madame wishes to see you."

Madame de Chauffours, in the kitchen, seemed delighted to greet him.

"Good day, Little English," she said smiling. "My sister, who lives where you tarried last night, sent word that you do talk. I am desirous to hear your voice."

"I am glad that you would wish to buy me," John replied. "I do not deserve your favour. But I shall be a good worker, as I was for the Maliseets."

"Ah!" She clapped her hands, turning to her husband. "He speaks. He speaks! And in such a gentlemanly manner, for a savage!"

"Now stand still, Little English, for I am going to make you some civilized clothes." As she spoke, she ran a string across John's shoulders, then from neck to hips, busily making notes on paper. "In three or four days you will be attired as smartly as any French boy in Acadia, if perhaps not in Paris!"

She took a step backward and silently regarded him for a moment, her head tilted to one side, with an amused expression. With a twinge John remembered that he was still wearing his greasy blanket and Indian flap.

"Come with me now," said John's new master brusquely. "I will get you settled, for there is work awaiting."

<sup>1</sup> This was hardly a large plantation—nonetheless to John it seemed palatial. The Sieur de Chauffours had 65 acres under cultivation, with 22 cattle, 50 hogs, 150 fowl. The livestock, he informed John, would be much more numerous if French privateers had not put demands on him for many head as their need arose. Farther up river, at Natchouac (Nashwaak), which in English meant "Slow Current," he had 30 more acres of wheat, peas, corn, oats, also a mill—the first lumber mill in what is now New Brunswick.

As she had promised, Marguerite Guyon de-Chauffours wrought a transformation in her slave boy's appearance. Within a week her deft fingers had fashioned him the beginnings of a new wardrobe, including a coat, an Osnaburg shirt and a French cap.

It took him a long time to get used to himself. Often on a Sunday he glanced sideways as he passed the mirror—not out of prideful vanity, which his religion forbade, but out of wonder that this could really be he.

After years of near-nakedness, the garments felt strangely tight and binding; though everyone agreed they fitted perfectly. With his sun-and-wind-browned face, so like that of the dark-complexioned French youths, visitors assumed he was an Acadian boy—and they puzzled when he could not understand what they spoke to him.

In the third month, John, French cap awkwardly held tight under his arm, sought Madame de Chauffours at the door of her sewing room where he could see her reading. He felt ill at ease.

"Well, Little English!" she exclaimed in Maliseet, and motioned him to come in and sit beside her. Her eyes missed little. "You have troubles, as possibly we all do. Tell me: Are you not content here?"

"It is not that, Madame." He frowned as he groped for occasional French words to intersperse with the Maliseet when they seemed to suit his meaning better. "But I am concerned about Father Simon's whereabouts."

This evidently surprised her. She studied his expression. "But why do you inquire of the good friar? We do not expect him. He comes to us but rarely."

John only wanted out of gratitude to tell Father Simon he was willing to stay—there would be no necessity to buy him back for the Maliseets. But he hesitated to disclose to this lady who had befriended him that he had made an arrangement to extricate himself from her service.

Madame was trying to be helpful. "Should it be of solace to you," she said, "I shall request whatever missionary comes to us to give you counsel."

John saw he could not pursue the subject. He said, "There is something else—I would beg a favour."

Madame regarded him quizzically. For some inexplicable

reason, John thought, he always entertained her. The sides of her eyes were dancing as if she could scarcely restrain a smile.

"If it is a boon within my power to grant, Little English . . ."

"I would ask," he said seriously, that you and Monsieur cease to address me in Maliseet. In order to live here and work in my master's trading post, I must speak your language. But in two months I have acquired little more than 'Oui' and 'Non'." Madame seemed pleased.

"Granted. And I am sure that as a young gentleman of New England, you would not wish to receive value for nothing. So you shall teach us some of your English in return. Agreed?"

The Sieur and Madame de Chauffours took John Gyles at his word. He was sometimes privileged to dine with them—but if he merely wanted the bread, or butter, or salt passed, he had to ask in French. As he was a healthy and hungry boy, he learned fast.

And John's master learned one day he had obtained an unexpected extra bargain in the boy. They were stacking casks of wine in the log cabin trading post when they noticed two Indians outside the window, arguing animatedly over the four beaver skins they were toting.

"They are strange Indians from another territory, which is why their talk is gibberish," explained Monsieur.

The boy listened a moment.

"They have agreed not to take fewer than four knives for their pelts," John said, "and as many more as they can get. One has told the other to keep the poorest pelt on the bottom."

"How could you possibly know this?"

"They are Micmacs—Souriquois—and I met many of them at Fort Meductic, sometimes to my pain. I am fluent in their tongue."

The Indians were plainly puzzled when, after they entered and demanded eight knives—pointing to a knife and then their fingers—the proprietor insisted on four knives. Even more so when he flipped over the first three pelts and shook his head over the last one. They took the four knives.

John Gyles wrote:

My French master had a great trade with the Indians, which suited me very well. Monsieur generally had his goods from the men-of-war which came annually from France. I had not

lived long with this gentleman before he committed to me the keys of his store, etc., and my whole employment was trading and hunting, in which I acted faithfully for my master, and never knowingly wronged him to the value of one farthing.

Often he thought of Mal-lee, of O-ski-tchin, of Father Simon. He knew he retained some marked Indian traits. He betrayed little emotion under stress. The farmhands told him he spoke French with a Maliseet accent and they looked on with curiosity as he practised splitting butternuts with his bow and arrow, for this marked him as a half-breed at best.

Nevertheless his status had changed remarkably. Visiting Indians were respectful, for to all appearances he was French. And because the de Chauffours family treated him kindly, other French settlers did the same.

This being so, the boy wondered repeatedly why the French so hated the English. It was bewildering. John had heard even Father Simon exhort the Indians to raid and burn and attack again. It was only to be expected that Father Simon would have trouble in persuading the savages not to be cruel to captives, when in his last sermon he had heatedly urged them to take up the hatchet. The Indians could not follow the logic at all.

And as John learned more from the de Chauffours about what had gone before, the futility of the endless strife appalled him.

Jemseg<sup>1</sup> had been a constant pawn in the swirling thrust-and-parry of great powers.

No one seemed happier than Madame de Chauffours over John's new-found proficiency in her language. "You should be proud, for you have the advantage of your owners. You can speak four tongues; we, only two." Then she laughed: "It is difficult for Monsieur and me. Once we could converse in French when we did not wish you to hear; now we are defenceless."

One day, as good as her word, Madame sent a friar to counsel

<sup>1</sup> The English military had built a fort here nearly half a century before; Acadia was restored to France by treaty and the fort was taken over by a French Governor; then a Dutch force captured it and held the French commander to ransom for one thousand beaver skins and Acadia became New Holland; then a Boston expedition conquered Jemseg for the English; and once more it was restored to France.

John. He was a missionary who had arrived to live in the household.

John Gyles recorded that the friar:

Invited me to confession, but I excused myself as well as I could at that time. One evening he took me into his apartment in the dark and advised me to confess to him what sins I had committed. I told him I could not remember a thousandth part of them, they were so numerous. Then he bid me remember and relate as many as I could, and he would pardon them, signifying he had a bag to put them in. I told him I did not believe it was in the power of anyone but God to pardon sin. He asked me whether I had read the Bible. I told him I had when I was a little boy, but it was so long ago I had forgotten most of it. Then he told me he did not pardon my sins, but when he knew them he prayed to God to pardon them; when, perhaps, I was at my sports and plays. He wished me well, and hoped I should be better advised, and said he should call for me in a little time. Thus he dismissed me, nor did he ever call me to confession afterwards.

In their ardour, John observed, the friars sometimes expected more of their religion than it could perform for them. This was illustrated one day in a fine field of wheat where great numbers of blackbirds created havoc. French settlers told John, "A Jesuit will come and banish them."

The friar came. With elaborate preparation he took a basin of holy water, a staff with a little brush, and, wearing his white robe, strode into the wheat field.

Several English prisoners were being held at Jemseg then—among them Messrs Woodbury, Cox and Morgan, who had been seized by French privateers. John dropped in at their hut. It was a rare and wonderful treat to talk with Englishmen; it convinced him that his childhood world still existed, even if in a far-away land.

"Would you like to come and see the ceremony?" he asked. "The blackbirds are about to be exiled from Jemseg."

Mr. Woodbury asked, "Do you intend to go?"

"Yes," said John.

"Then you are as bad as a Papist, and a damned fool."

"I do not believe in this ceremony," John replied. "But I wish to see it so that I may know, and tell my friends."

Mr. Woodbury refused to budge.

Here is John's description of the ritual:

With about thirty following in procession, the Jesuit marched through the field of wheat, a young lad going before him bearing the holy water. Then the Jesuit, dipping his brush into the holy water, sprinkled the field on each side of him, a little bell jingling at the same time, and all singing the words "Ora pro nobis."

At the end of the field they wheeled to the left about, and returned. Thus they passed and re-passed the field of wheat, the blackbirds all the while rising before them only to light behind.

At their return I told a French lad that the friar had done no service, and recommended them to shoot the birds. The lad left me, as I thought, to see what the Jesuit would say to my observation, which turned out to be the case, for he told the lad that the sins of the people were so great he could not prevail against those birds.

The same friar as vainly attempted to banish the musketoos from Signecto but the sins of the people there were also too great for him to prevail, but, on the other hand, it seemed that more came, which caused the people to suspect that some had come for the sins of the Jesuit also.

Staunch as he was in his own faith, John still admired the devotion of these missionaries. He could understand the esteem the Indians held for them—they knew courage when they saw it. The friars were dedicated to their task. Frail of body they might be, and frequently they fell victim to pestilence, but there were always others ready to take their place, and the work of conversion inexorably went on.

Now nearly seventeen, John Gyles found life at Jemseg gracious compared with Fort Meductic. He was a slave, yoked outright; yet lived like a member of the de Chauffours family. So he was quick to sense vague undercurrents which disquieted Monsieur and his wife—undoubtedly, John thought, what had caused Madame to say, "You have troubles, as possibly we all do..."

Once she acknowledged, when he was helping her take the yarn off her spinning wheel and make it into skeins, "I am not superstitious like the Indians, Little English; but sometimes I have intuition or presentiment—and I feel certain that the days of our seigniory on this river are numbered."

"You should not fear the English warships," John said. "Jemseg is many leagues from the mouth of the river, and the fort at Nachouac even more distant."

Madame replied without hesitation, "It is not the English I fear—it is our own commandant of Acadia, at Nachouac—de Villebon."

De Villebon! It was a name to conjure with on the river; he was a man you could like or dislike, but not ignore. The French historian Diereville, who visited de Villebon on the St. John, described him as "a great man of fine appearance and full of energy." An old Jemseg Indian had told John shortly after his arrival, "He is indeed a chieftain—a sagamore of the French."

John Gyles had never seen him, for de Villebon had vacated Jemseg and built a new fortress at Nachouac (opposite Fredericton) in 1692. But never a day passed without the shadow of de Villebon hovering over the family's conversation.

Lotus d'Amours, Sieur de Chauffours, regarded de Villebon as brilliantly clever—but hardly to be trusted. Politely cordial as de Villebon was whenever they met socially, de Chauffours was well aware, from correspondence secretly copied and sent to him, that de Villebon would gladly see all the d'Amours routed out of Acadia.

There were four of them, brothers who shared a close-knit fidelity toward one another and came from a distinguished Québec family.<sup>1</sup> True, one brother was a black sheep—Rene, Sieur de Clignancourt, whose estate of nearly one million acres stretched ninety miles from Meductic to Grand Falls—the "Monsieur Sigenoncour" whom John remembered roaming the woods like one of the notorious *coureurs-de-bois*, trading brandy and wine to the Fort Meductic Indians for their prized pelts. But the others—

<sup>1</sup> A family which had to exert itself to find suitable vocations for all its offspring. The father, the Sieur d'Amours, took a bride who was to have more children than the years of her age. She was fourteen when she married; she had fifteen children.

Louis, Sieur de Chauffours; Mathieu, Sieur de Freneuse, and Bernard, Sieur de Plenne—had done a better job than most seigneurs in placing settlers on their granted lands, opening up roads, and administering justice among their tenants.

De Villebon complained by letter to the French Minister:

"They are four in number living on the St. John River. They are given up to lawlessness and independence for the ten or twelve years they have been here. They carry on no tillage, keep no cattle, but live in trading with the Indians and debauch among them, making large profits thereby, but injuring the public good. They are disobedient and seditious and require to be watched."

These charges were sharply rebuffed in a letter from M. de Champigny, the intendant at Quebec, to the same minister:

"The sons of the Sieur d'Amours, member of the Supreme Council at Quebec, who are settled on the River St. John, apply themselves chiefly to cultivating their lands and raising cattle. I send you, my lord, the census of their domain, which has been made by Father Simon, the Récollet, who is missionary on the same river, in which you may have every confidence, he being a very honest man."

It is unfortunate, my lord, that anyone should have informed you that they lead a licentious life with the savages, for I have reliable testimony that their conduct is very good.

It seems that all who live in these parts are in a state of discord; the inhabitants make great complaints against the Sieurs de Villebon and des Goutins. Some who have come to Quebec say they are so constantly harassed and oppressed that if things are not put on a better footing they will be compelled to abandon the country.

It is not known why Governor de Villebon so bitterly resented the d'Amours brothers. Possibly it was simply envy of their vast holdings and potential trade. Or de Villebon's animosity may have been partly due to the fact he also was a member of a large family of brothers—not all of whom had distinguished themselves.

In fact, de Villebon's own career had come under fire. Detractors charged he tried to corner the fur traffic by sponsoring the illegal

trading of his brothers Portneuf and des Isles among the savages. They alleged Portneuf was personally immortal, and that des Isles was so unscrupulous as to sell furs to the danger-defying English sea trader John Alden, eldest son of John Alden of the *Mayflower*.

But another brother, d'Iberville, more than made up for these deficiencies. His dramatic successes in battle won him the accolade of "the Cid of New France."

Early in the spring John Gyles and three French hands paddled fifty miles down river to Menagouche to collect supplies sent across the Bay of Fundy from Port Royal. Normally it was an easy trip, but on this occasion a blinding blizzard developed as they reached the ice-laden lower stretches. They carried their canoes overland, John wrote, to "a large bay, where we were driven on an island by a northeast storm, where we were kept seven days without any sustenance, for we expected a quick passage and carried nothing with us."

This was Long Island in the Kennebecasis River, in the domain of Bernard d'Amours—a branch of the St. John as broad as the main river itself. Overhanging them, above the narrow shore, was a giant perpendicular fissured cliff,<sup>1</sup> the site of a primeval volcanic upheaval.

It was an ironic and galling dilemma. They were a mile and a half from the mainland on one side, within hailing distance of a great peninsula on the other—but the precariously shifting ice cakes and the gale-force wind made it impossible either to walk or paddle across. Within sight of salvation they were starving. By the seventh day, hope had withered.

"Suck your mooseass, as I do," ordered Claude, the oldest hand. "It is scant nourishment, but it helps assuage the pangs."

John, Indian-like, remained stoic. "I am accustomed to hunger. I have learned to fast."

Claude, his temper frayed by fear and hunger, blazed angrily: "You have been the mortal ill-omen on this trip—part Indian, which is bad enough, and part English, which is worse! You have been our evil undoing. You should not live if we die. Why do you not seek help from your great god Glooscap?"

<sup>1</sup> Minister's Face. The Maliseets believed this was part of the house of a legendary giant beaver; his dam was smashed by their hero god Glooscap, creating the gorge at the Reversing Falls.

Out of the corner of his eye John kept watch on Claude. He had quietly conserved his energy. But he was ready to react swiftly if the crazed farmhand attacked him.

On the eighth day a shout came from a Frenchman on his knees: "The ice is moving out!"

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the masses of frozen cakes inched along, crowding and jostling each other toward the sea as the ice-jam miles below shifted.

John Gyles wrote:

We went forward, though we were so weak that we could scarce hear each other speak. The people at the mouth of the river were surprised to see us alive, and advised us to be cautious and abstemious in eating. By this time I knew as much of fasting as they, and dieted on broth, and recovered very well, as did one of the others; but the other two would not be advised, and I never saw any persons in greater distress, till at length they had action of the bowels, when they recovered.

While at Menagouche, Claude bought John Gyles a hunting knife—whether as an apology, or a bribe to seal his lips, or a token of gratitude for speaking to Glooscap, John was too tactful to inquire.

# 14

## A NEW ASSAULT ON PEMAGUID

It was a strange slavery at Jemseg, for John was permitted to come and go almost as he pleased. Sometimes he accompanied the de Chauffours on short trips aboard their sailing vessel, a moderate shallop. He was given permission to make himself a birch-bark canoe—though de Chauffours could not understand why in heaven's name anyone would wish to build one when Jemseg had several weather-scarred old canoes lying around to spare.

The boy named his canoe *Wape-ki-akew* (White Gull). It was a beautifully sleek craft weighing less than a hundred pounds, drawing only three inches of water and needing less than two feet of width clearance. John skimmed out in it through the stillness of many a dawn before the day's labour began. Often as he thrust the paddle deep and felt the hull obediently lift up and shoot forward, he wished O-ki-tchin could come back and see the wonderfully swift product of his teachings.

He paddled into the long shadows of the great pines near Jemseg, and threaded his way up the six-mile Jemseg River to where the vista opened on the far horizons of Grand Lake. There he saw a gaping cave where Malisets dug out lead ore and melted it to make bullets for hunting, and black caverns from which the early explorers extracted the first coal of North America.

Down the broad St. John stream he paddled as far as Ile Emencic<sup>1</sup>. Above Jemseg he travelled up to Fort Nachouac, a palisaded stronghold with four bastions and light cannon, home of the great

<sup>1</sup> Caton's Island, twenty-one miles from the sea, where the first European settlement of the river had been established in 1610 by traders and fishermen from St. Malo.

de Villebon himself. Many Indians were there in canoes and on shore, and they waved to him.

Increasingly proficient every month in French, John now had more reading than he could cope with—journals from Paris and Versailles, Acadian reports, his master's private papers which he was entrusted to sort and file, and in his clerical duties he learned more of the famous de Villebon.

"You know that I am confronted by an astute adversary in our governor," de Chauffours said, handing John a letter to put away, "and you may have wondered which is the pot and which is the kettle. But can you in your right senses conceive of me being responsible for a report like this?"

John read de Villebon's letter:

"An English savage was taken on the lower part of the St. John River; I gave him to our savages to be burned, which they did the next day; it was impossible to add to the torments they made him suffer."

As far as John was concerned there was no need for de Villebon to fill in the details—he could imagine them only too well. He could see the Mohawk being bound to the stake, the dry brush piled around. Then, invited to sing his death song, the Mohawk would chant, spitting taunts and epithets at his captors, branding them as cowards, boasting of his tribe's victories over them—until the Malisets, driven to a frenzy, would use him as a target for knives and tomahawks, stick his body full of splints of blazing pitch-pine, stuff hot embers into his wounds, and in an ecstasy of fury, before touching off the brush below him, scalp him alive. If he screamed they would laugh and mock his voice.

John read on from de Villebon's letter:

"The missionary, M. de Thury, confirms the report I already had received of four small parties of our Indians having killed fifteen or sixteen English and burnt one of them alive on account of one of their chiefs being slain."

Monsieur was watching his expression.

"Well, John?"

John replied, "I asked Father Simon why the Indians remained cruel despite his efforts to Christianize them; but if I saw him again I would ask him to give some attention to Monsieur de Villebon too."

De Chauffours commented, "Heaven knows, I am not criterion of the eternal virtues. I am not above taking advantage of the savages' ignorance. But there are points beyond which I will not go. Have you heard recently what transpired at Oyster River?"

"No," John said. "But I know of the place. I have met captives who were seized there years ago."

"Read this report."

The document stated:

During the interval of formal peace between England and France, the farmers of Oyster River, twelve miles from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, hoed their crops under the comfortable delusion it was no longer necessary to post sentinels or keep their muskets handy.

Accordingly, on July 18th, an easy time was had by two hundred and fifty warriors led by Monsieur de Villebon's deputy Villieu, who was himself embellished in the war paint and features of an Indian chieftain.

One hundred men, women and children were hatched, shot or tortured to death. Twenty-seven others were made captives. The scalps were taken to Count Frontenac at Quebec by Madockawando, who was generously rewarded for breaking his peace agreement with the English.

It was indeed an easy time, John learned a few days later when returning Indians stopped at Jemseg with several footsore English prisoners. Oyster River's residents had been lulled by the rumour that Governor Phips, in this year of the Lord 1694, had thankfully declared the war ended.

When the Indians, at the signal of a dawn musket-shot, simultaneously attacked almost all garrison houses on both sides of the river, they burst in on families whose doors were not even barricaded; some were out of powder.

Right and left the demoniacal butchery raged on. In one home the savages slew fourteen settlers of all ages—"one, being a woman with child, they ripped open."

"Sooner or later," de Chauffours said, "retaliation will be heaped on our heads by England for these massacres. God help us. Our very hearths will be imperilled. We will lose all we possess. De Villebon goes too far. Even now a great Indian expedition is being

mounted to capture Pemaquid—and that could be the last straw. Do you happen to know this settlement?"

Pemaquid!

"Yes... I know it well."

"Ah—then doubtless you are aware how very powerful is the fortress there. I am intimately acquainted with the prospect, because de Villebon outlined it in asking how many French hands I could spare in addition to my ship."

John was alert. He had heard long ago that Major Church was building new fortifications at his old home, but he knew nothing of their character.

"Here is the plan our Indians found," said de Chauffours. "They took it off the body of an English engineer. Most interesting—the strongest fort the New England colonists have ever built—quite impregnable in their opinion."

"See, now—it is a quadrangle one hundred and eighty feet across, in compass seven hundred and forty-seven feet with walls of stone ten to twenty-two feet high, cemented in lime mortar. The round tower at the corner is twenty-nine feet high. Eight feet from the ground, where the walls are six feet thick, there is a tier of twenty-eight portholes. There are sixteen cannon mounted on the walls. The whole affair," he continued, shaking his head, "has cost twenty thousand pounds—what a fabulous price! It required more than two thousand cartloads of stone. It is well armed and provisioned, and garrisoned by ninety-five men, and almost surrounded by the tide at high water."

"Then it should be apparent," said John quickly, "that any assault, however massive, will be repulsed."

"Of course!" said Monsieur. "We will lose many of our effectives, Indian and French, to no avail. But even suppose for the sake of argument the stronghold falls—what then? The English will be on us in Acadia like wounded lions!"

John fully realized what disturbed his master. De Chauffours would be soon obliged to cross the ocean to vindicate himself at the Versailles court—a journey that would take months. Meanwhile what fate might de Villebon's headlong course bring down, not only on his home, but upon his wife, and children?

"You perhaps think," de Chauffours said, "I am obsessed with anger toward this man who is my compatriot and also my enemy."

And you are perhaps right—for he has done me incalculable harm, and may do much more. Sometimes I envy the savages their life. It may be harsh to their bodies, but they are spared the ceaseless intrigues, the mistrust and doubts and apprehensions, the sinister manoeuvrings that torture the souls of the white men whose well-provisioned lives they envy."

Suddenly he turned now very self-possessed, and said:

"Here is a small chore for you. I wish to have two copies written of this memorandum of presents to the value of 3640 livres accorded by His Majesty to the Indians of Acadia for their warfare against the English."

As John scanned it, Monsieur went on bitterly, "You will understand at what price the Indians win the muskets they cherish so highly for winter hunting—they stake their lives in battle. This same governor, de Villebon, proposed once that to save money for the royal treasury, all annual gifts to the savages be withheld except in time of war. He was later overruled but only because the Indians were becoming suspicious of sinister motives in the King's affection for them."

John began copying out the list:

2,000 pounds of powder  
40 kegs of bullets  
10 kegs of swan shot  
400 pounds of Brazilian tobacco  
200 tomahawks, for which M. Bonaventure will provide a model  
60 selected muskets like those sent last year  
200 mule shirts averaging 30 sous each  
8 pounds of fine vermillion  
200 tufts of white feathers to be given to the Indians as a distinguishing mark in case of a night attack, which should not cost more than 6 to 7 s. a piece; to be selected by M. Bonaventure.

Watching his quill pen scratching, de Chauffours spoke an apparent afterthought that caused John's hand to falter.

"I desire that you come with me to Fort Nachouac, John," he said. "I am aware that it may be odious to you to see preparations

for an attack on the English, but you are still my clerk, and I may need your assistance."

Thus it was that within a few days John Gyles sailed with his master up to Fort Nachouac—there to see de Villebon put on the climatic performance of his entire career.

De Villebon's main task was to keep the Indians in a constant ferment of war with the English. This was, at times, no simple business. His savage allies were fickle. For the smallest cause—because of the most innocuous portent—they would suddenly abandon a long-planned attack.

A snake might cross the path of a chieftain on a portage and he would hold up his hand for all to halt while he addressed the snake:

"Hello, uncle, how well you look today!"

Then following along in its wriggling wake, he continued, "Tell me, uncle—did you waylay us as a warning? Should we go home?"

Then he summoned his braves to form a circle around the defensively coiled snake, and they lighted their pipes and blew wisps of smoke toward it.

"Uncle," entreated the sagamore, "why don't you come and visit us soon? You are living too far away!"

Another Indian interjected hopefully, "Will you look after my family while I am on the raid?"

And another, even more hopefully: "Uncle, will you whisper to Governor de Villebon how I thirst? Tell him to fill my wigwam with casks!"

The French officers could only watch fretfully, aware that valuable time was slipping by and a rendezvous might be missed. Yet they dared not intervene for fear of irritating the savages.

Strangely, the snake appeared to be reassured either by the voices or the smoke, and languorously stretched itself out to full length. The French advisors breathed a sigh of relief when the Indians interpreted this as a sign of contentment with them and decided to press on with the expedition.

The periodic plagues which decimated the Indian tribes never made de Villebon afraid for his own health. They only infuriated him.

Once in the midst of an epidemic he launched a strong party of Malisets and Micmacs to join the Passamaquoddies and

Penobscots in an offensive against New England forts—only to find them peremptorily sent home. Their Indian allies did not want them. They would rather face the English steel alone than face the terror of invisible pestilence.

Then too there was the occasional annoyance to the governor when a small English outpost, destined to certain defeat, stubbornly refused to admit it. This had a most discouraging effect on his Indians.

Biggest thorn of all was Wells—the most stoutly defended English stronghold for years after the seizing of Fort Andros at Pejepscot, the disaster at Casco's Fort Loyal, the assaults on Saco, Berwick, Pennaquid and many other points. This Maine settlement barred the French invasion path to Boston. Yet, surprisingly, it possessed no great fortress. It did possess eight garrison houses—residential semi-forts into which the settlers could dash—and high courage under extreme privation.

When an Indian assault on Wells in June 1691 was hurled back, the savage allies of the French began to tire of the fray. They knew Phips had seized Port Royal; Major Church had been ravaging Indian villages on the frontier; they feared the next blow. Besides, the glowing French pledges about pillaging Boston had proved empty. The Indians hankered to trade once more with New England. They longed to barter for the return of Indian captives in English hands. Some chiefs again entered into peace negotiations with New England.

Alarmed, French commanders in Acadia and Quebec mapped plans for an extraordinary mid-winter venture to revive Indian morale. A snowshoe trek to attack the Settlement of York in Maine.

It caught the unsuspecting town entirely by surprise—for who could have thought that out of a blinding blizzard on a February dawn, when the land was deep in snowdrifts, the fiends from the north would materialize?

York was a triumph for de Villebon's brother Portneuf. Two garrison houses were swiftly taken; others were avoided. One hundred settlers were killed, eighty made captive.

Back at Fort Nachouac later, Portneuf made merry. He led the Maliseets in festivities by singing a victory song in their own tongue, and broke open a barrel of wine.

Now de Villebon was greatly desirous of maintaining the momentum. And what could be more stimulating to the French cause than the obliteration of Wells?

Wells was waiting. Everyone—soldiers, settlers, wives, and children—knew every detail of the tragedy of York.

Because his leadership had been such a good omen, de Villebon assigned Portneuf again to head the expedition. The focal target: Storer's garrison.

Meanwhile Governor Phips of Massachusetts had despatched the experienced and blooded Indian fighter, Captain Converse, to Storer's with fifteen men.

On June 9, 1692, fortuitously, two sloops sailed upstream to Wells with stores and ammunition and fourteen more men for Storer's.

That same day cattle came stampeding into Wells from the outer pasturage. Indian warriors had fired on them and tipped their hand.

Captain Converse immediately ordered a general alert. Every man at his post.

Now, abruptly, a terrifying sight appeared to the eyes of Storer's garrison. Out of the woods into the open came five hundred Indians led by Portneuf and La Broquière—all brandishing their guns. So confident were the warriors that even before the actual attack began, their chiefs warmly debated who should get most of the booty.

With wild screeches and the firing of guns, the first waves advanced on the garrison, to be answered by a hail of shot. Several attackers fell writhing. In the silence that ensued, an Indian who knew English shouted:

"Surrender! Surrender while there is yet time!"

From the garrison came the reply: fusillades of musket and cannon fire, so heavy as to imply there were many more than thirty in the garrison. There were. The women were not only reloading guns and handing them to the soldiers but taking potshots at the Indians themselves.

The attackers offered Captain Converse conditions of surrender. He shouted back: "We want nothing but men to fight with."

Derisively the Indian spokesman yelled: "Don't stay in the house like a squaw—come out and fight like a man!"

Converse flung back: "Do you think I am fool enough to come out with thirty men to five hundred?"

The battle raged on.

The next morning, Pontneuf decided on a great climactic assault. As the horizon became alive with warriors—as the advance started—a nervous settler spoke in the ear of Captain Converse, "Surrender!"

The commander spun on him: "Say that again and you are a dead man!"

He meant it, he remembered Casco.

The doubter sprang to his porthole and commenced firing.

Right up to the gates came the Indians, but, unable to force entry, they were driven back by the unrelenting barrage.

Suddenly out of nowhere came shouts in English. Six scouts, returning from an expedition toward Berwick, thought up a ruse to get into the garrison.

"Captain Converse!" shouted their leader. "Wheel your men around this hill and we will have these dogs!"

While the Indians stared, unmoving, frozen by doubt, the six men sprinted in through the gates and joined the garrison.

The failure at Wells disheartened the Indians; and when Governor Phips by Royal order started to erect a huge stone fort at Pemaquid, and Captain Converse took the initiative and ravaged the borders in 1693, pausing only to build a stone fort at Saco, the Indians were ready to negotiate.

These were times that tried not only the French military commanders but also the more militant missionaries like M. Thury of Pentagouet, who, the enraged English heard, stretched a point by telling the Indians the English had crucified Our Lord.

Whenever his Indians lost stomach, de Villebon went to great exertions to whip up their fierce hatred again. Fortunately for him the English often proved his best allies in accomplishing this. For example, in February of 1696, when Chiefs Egremont and Taxous, with a few followers, went to Fort Pemaquid to ask for an exchange of prisoners, they were well received, encouraged with promises, and unsuspectingly approached the gate for a final parley. Whereupon Captain Pasco Chubb's men shot Egremont and his sons and two other Indians. Taxous escaped. Now the savages were boiling for revenge.

De Villebon greeted with open arms a delegation of one hundred agitated Maine braves—Kennebecs and Penobscots—who arrived at Fort Nachouac. It was a great time of feasting, carousing, singing, speech-making, gift-giving. When the idea was suggested of raising a huge war party to attack the English, every brave was enthusiastically for it. Message-bearers were despatched—and from all parts of Acadia, Maliseets and Micmacs flocked in.

Amid the gathering fervor de Villebon was in his own flamboyant element. Once in an elaborate ritual before the eyes of assembled warriors, he had made Chief Taxous his blood brother—and, in the bargain, presented him with his best coat.

Now, as the exhortations from their chieftains continued, as the braves' emotion reached a hectic pitch, the Chevalier Robineau de Villebon, son of Baron Becancourt, thrust his way in among them, cleared a space, tossed a hatchet up into the air, expertly caught it and then, shivering, shaking, intoning a chant like a wolf cry, began to do an erratic, but rhythmic, war dance.

Whoops and screams of approval greeted the transmutation of the dignified governor into a bloodthirsty warrior. Immediately a twisting, snaking line of braves formed behind him. The frantic yelling din was so loud that John, watching beside the Sieur de Chauffours, thought his eardrums would burst.

The wild pow-wow depressed John; and the subsequent meeting on shipboard between de Villebon and de Chauffours baffled him, unused as he was to the etiquette of France which decreed that enemies should still exchange pleasantries in public. John would not have been surprised if Monsieur, confronted by the governor, had forthwith drawn his sword and run him through. That is what an Indian smouldering with anger would have done, using a hatchet. Instead, there were glad exclamations and bows and handclaps, and Monsieur clapped de Villebon on the shoulder as they headed for the cabin to have a drink. They talked far into the night. John Gyles, sitting by the rail, could hear snatches of the conversation.

"The English cannot withstand the mounting pressure forever," de Villebon was saying. "Their spirit has been worn thin by years of harassment. It must reach the breaking point. In hemmed-in settlements all the way to Boston they live in hourly dread of attack—the farmhands well know that tilling the soil is to invite

certain death, if not today, tomorrow. When the garrisons hear musket fire and send out troops to save the labourers, the troops themselves are ambushed and cut to pieces."

"But look at Wells," de Chauffours reminded him. "Surely that settlement is a reproach to your confidence. It still holds out."

De Villebon dismissed this with an impatient gesture.

"Wells is cracking from within—we have intercepted couriers advising Boston: the ladders are almost bare, they cannot feed themselves let alone the refugees who have come begging for shelter. If Boston sends no relief, then all of them—men, women, and children—say they must try to walk through the wilderness to the south!"

"And you will be waiting for them?"

De Villebon smiled. "Our Indians are waiting at this moment."

"But the English colonies to the south are so much more populous than we..."

Almost indignantly the governor thrust aside the thought.

"What matter numbers when complete discouragement sets in? Almost every village in Maine except Wells, Kittery and York has been destroyed! Soon will come the great final crushing drives from Quebec and Acadia—we roll up the last settlements; let them evacuate their survivors from Boston and New York, then we march south, annihilating towns as we go."

Next morning, sailing down the river in a brisk breeze, John was silent and remote.

"You may imagine," said de Chauffours at long last, "that I am somewhat—how shall I put it?—hypocritical. But do not forget that while de Villebon can be many things, he can be an inspiring leader. I am persuaded now that Pemaquid is not unconquerable; its collapse may signal the retreat of the English all the way to Boston."

John, busy coiling deck ropes, remained silent.

"And the personalities must be taken into account. The attacking forces will be led by de Villebon's distinguished brother d'Iberville. Who opposes him? A nonentity with a guilty conscience, Captain Chubb. If it were the infamous Major Church, of course, the entire venture would be folly. Or the mad defender of Wells, Captain Converse. But Captain Chubb..."

Still John said nothing.

"I am informed," said de Chauffours, ignoring the silence, "that this will be the greatest Indian expedition in ninety years. Nothing like it since the great vengeance of the Acadian tribes against the Armouchiquois in Maine. What a spectacle that must have been!"

And listening to him recount the tale, John Gyles had to admit, in spite of himself, that it must have been an epic expedition to witness.

It seemed that near Saco, in 1605, the Armouchiquois tribesmen of Chief Bessabez had slain an Acadian sagamore, Pennoniac, as he guided the French explorers Champlain and de Monts along the coastline.

Then canoe messengers hastened out to all points of what are now the Maritime Provinces. The call to arms brought war-painted Micmac braves swarming into Port Royal. French settlers looked on awestruck, even though these were their allies, at the sight of the squadrons of war canoes, each group under its own commander, setting forth to cross the rolling swells of the Bay of Fundy to the unseen far shore. Leading was a proud, upright, leathery-skinned ancient, the renowned Chief Membertou, who, nearly three-quarters of a century before, in 1534, had welcomed Jacques Cartier to New Brunswick's Northumberland Strait coast. At the mouth of the St. John River, Maliseet legions joined them. Then the combined armada of more than four hundred warriors struck out to sea again, often obscured from shore-watchers' view by the tumbling combers.

The fight at Saco proved ferocious, bloody, and hard won. Bessabez and many of his followers fell victim to the invaders from the north.

De Chauffours finished his account as the shallop came into Jemseg. He waited only long enough to prepare for the journey to Penobscot, where his part in the attack was to ferry armament and supplies. He would be safe from the ground defenders, but would run a grave risk of being intercepted by English warships on privateers. Capture could mean death or imprisonment.

For his wife, as always, it would be a long and anxious wait.

John Gyles stayed with her and, as best he could in the days that followed, tried to keep her mind occupied with English lessons. But she could not always focus her attention on syntax and pronunciation, nor, for that matter, could he.

Both were envisioning the same scene in their minds, but they were viewing it differently. Madame saw a fortress crumbling instantly, as if touched by a magic wand; John saw a staunch stone castle warding off cannon shot as if it were hail, then counter-attacking as the Indians fled in disarray.

John was in the midst of one of his tutoring sessions when shrill Indian shouts drifted through the open windows.

His heart sank. The whoops were the all too familiar sound of victory. Running to the window, he saw the sails of the shallop far down the river.

He hung back—the only member of the estate who did not rush to the jetty to share in the homecoming welcome. He liked de Chauffours now, but victory for him meant defeat for the English.

Moments later, Monsieur burst exultantly into the house, tossing aside his hat and cloak and sword and shouting to John to serve the wine.

"What a classic triumph!" he exclaimed to everyone within hearing as he drained his glass. "The greatest ever for France, the most humiliating for the English—and to think, such a prize at such little cost!"

Numbly John Gyles went about his duties, listening to the details.

It had begun with a sharp naval clash in the Bay of Fundy even before the expedition got under way. Two English warships, cruising outside Menagoueches, were engaged by two French warships sent from Quebec under d'Iberville, and Bonaventure to support the impending assault. D'Iberville on the *Enuieux* dominated and captured the *Neuport* of twenty-four guns. After a three-hour bout with the *Profond*, the English ship *Sortings* of thirty-four guns escaped into the misty night.

Then d'Iberville nearly did himself more damage than the English by running the *Enuieux* aground on a reef, but was luckily refloated on the next tide.

His tiny fleet reached the proximity of Fort William Henry at Pemaquid before the Indians; the seamen backed out a rough road to transport cannon and mortars. Then hundreds of savage warriors—including one hundred and thirty Penobscots under St. Castin—came pouring in from their canoes, accompanied by sixty Frenchmen. Fathers Thury and Simon were both there. The

atmosphere was taut, as from St. Castin went a message to Captain Chubb: "Surrender or be delivered to the fury of the savages!"

The beleaguered commander returned a defiant answer: "Though the sea be covered with ships and the land with warriors he would not surrender."

Promptly the Indians opened musket fire. D'Iberville lobbed four or five bombs at the fort.

St. Castin sent a second ultimatum—and astonishingly, Captain Chubb<sup>1</sup> capitulated, hauling down his flag.

The Indians, yelling, rushed forward, eager for the slaughter. D'Iberville restrained them with difficulty. He supervised the removal of the garrison to an island within range of his guns, not lest they try to escape, but lest the rampaging Indians try to attack them.

"It was good that he did," de Chauffours said, "for in the fort we discovered one of our Indians in irons, emaciated, almost dead, waiting to be hanged. The savages were incensed." He continued, "And so were the English when we sailed later into Boston; but it was hard to tell whether they were more furious at the French and Indians or at Captain Chubb."

"Even while we were in port, the legislature of Massachusetts was talking of offering a bounty of forty pounds—a small fortune!—for the scalp of a male Indian, and ten pounds for an Indian under ten years."

Madame's eyes were closed tight, her hands clasping the sides of her hair over her ears as if to shut out the words. She was trembling.

"You might have been killed by the English," she said, "or at least imprisoned."

Monsieur looked at her in surprise, as if wondering why women carried on so. "Naturally not," he said, "for we were in the port under guarantee of safe conduct, exchanging the English prisoners for French and Indian prisoners. That is the chivalry of war."

Madame intervened: "But you had casualties?"

"Ah, yes," he replied happily. "We did indeed! One Frenchman—he caught pleurisy moving cannon in the chill rain."

<sup>1</sup> Chubb was arrested by the colonial authorities; a military board ruled he must lose his commission forever. Ironically, two years later, living at Andover in disgrace, he and his wife and three others were massacred in an Indian attack.

Madame only shook her head; she seemed close to tears. She could not understand this strange overture of ferocity and gentlemanly agreement—not for that matter could John, who had lived long among straight-thinking Indians who, when they saw an avowed enemy, did the logical thing and unhesitatingly despatched him.

## IS MAJOR CHURCH COMES CALLING

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An English counter-blow had to be expected. De Villebon knew it, and kept preparing for it.

The disaster at Pemaquid was galling to the English for several reasons: It lost their costly fort and the village; it was supposed to protect; it lost face for the New England cause; it encouraged the Indians to further assaults. All up and down the St. John river the tension could be felt.

Not that the English would come by land to attack Fort Nachouac itself, the Acadian headquarters, for the long trail through the wilds from New England was tortuous and arduous even for the Indians. Nor were they likely to attempt an assault on the fort by water, for this would mean negotiating the treacherous rapids at the river's mouth and then sailing eighty miles upstream—a long course hazardous for unaccustomed windships. Below Nachouac they would have to run the gauntlet of stretches so narrow as to make it appear a ship was sailing through the meadow itself.

Far more probable was an English foray against the exposed Acadian settlements in the Nova Scotia peninsula and the Chignecto isthmus connecting it with the mainland.

If the Sieur de Chauffours harboured any apprehensions as he packed his baggage for the long voyage to France, he hid them from his wife. He cheerily bade her goodbye and promised to bring her presents in the newest Paris modes.

John Gyles accompanied him on the shallop down to Menagouetche, at the mouth of the river, and boarded the man-of-war to help with the baggage. As de Chauffours bade him farewell, he entrusted him with the care of Jemseg. At seventeen John Gyles

was reckoned a man. Officially, he might be a slave, but de Chauffours knew he was intelligent and trustworthy. A bond of affection existed between the two in spite of the fact that they belonged to warring nations. It did not occur to de Chauffours to doubt John Gyles' loyalty.

The news came straggling through the wilderness less than a fortnight after the man-of-war bore out into the Bay of Fundy.

"Little English! Madame came running out to the dairy shed where John was churning butter.

Her blanched face told him everything before she could utter another word.

"What has come!" she said, saucer-eyed. "The English are upon us—they have burned our villages at Chignecto!"

John felt neither surprise nor alarm. No surprise, because the attack had been as predictable as the approach of winter itself. No alarm, because these attackers were, after all, his own people.

"The saints preserve us!" Madame went on, wiping away tears. "Come, hear the horrible tales of these starving settlers who made their way through the forests to us. There are three in our kitchen!"

To see them there, ragged, staring from eyes recessed in dark sockets, wolfing down their bowls of food, was indeed pitiful. The story they told was even more so. They had been peacefully tending their crops when out of nowhere appeared English troops who drove them into the woods, slaughtered their cattle and fired their homes, barns, and church.

At the head of the force had been a portly, commanding figure and they knew instantly to their terror who he was—none other than the inhuman Major Church, the legendary bane of the Indians, the nemesis of King Philip, now the scourge of New France.

"He has no feelings, no heart, no mercy!" Madame's voice was hysterical in John's ear. "He is not a man, but a beast!"

He nodded to show he heard, but was struck by how the definition of cruelty pivoted largely on the point of view from which side of the border you were watching.

Major Church of Plymouth was a fiend incarnate to the Acadians. To the English, this descendant of Richard Warren of the

*Mayflower* was an audacious hero with a magical life, whose few human shortcomings could be readily forgiven.

Wily de Villebon was taking no chances. Powerless to save Chignecto, he posted his ensign Chevalier and five scouts at the mouth of the St. John.

The moment English sails were espied, Chevalier hastened the alarm up river.

John was thrilled. The fantastic boldness<sup>1</sup> of it! The English were about to dare the swirling eddies and rip-tides of the Reversing Falls, the long winding river and its uncharted shoals, the hazards of being trapped in an early winter snowstorm, or of Indian ambush in the narrow places where there was no room to manoeuvre.

Madame de Chauffours was distraught. Suddenly, unbelievably she found herself thrown on the mercy of her English slave. She sought out John. It was a moment he was never in his lifetime to forget. His journal recorded the conversation:

Little English, we have shewn you kindness and now it lies in your power to serve or disserve us, as you know where our goods are hid in the woods and Monsieur is not at home.

I could have sent you to the fort and put you under confinement: but my respect for you and assurance of your love to us have disposed me to confide in you, persuaded that you will not run away to the English, who are coming up the river, but serve our interest.

I will acquaint Monsieur of it at his return from France which will be very pleasing to him; and I now give my word that you shall have liberty to go to Boston on the first opportunity, if you desire it, or that any other favour in my power shall not be deny'd you.

What a quandary for John Gyles!

English ships only hours away—bringing with them the certainty of a safe return home. Freedom was within his grasp.

Unhesitatingly he gave his answer:

<sup>1</sup> Major Church himself thought the venture too rash. But sailing toward Baron St. Castin's Penobscot outpost he had met a small squadron under Col. Hawthorne, and Hawthorne, who outranked him, demanded they combine forces for an attack on Natchouac.

Madam, it is contrary to the nature of the English to requite evil for good. I shall endeavour to serve you and your interest. I shall not run to the English; but if I am taken by them shall willingly go with them and yet endeavour not to disserve you either in your person or goods.

Madame de Chaffours was overjoyed. At her urgent request, John printed a message for her in English and nailed it to the front door:

I intreat the General of the English not to burn my house or barn, nor destroy my cattle. I don't suppose that such an army comes up this river to destroy a few inhabitants but for the fort above us. I have shewn kindness to the English captives as we were capacitated and have bought two captives of the Indians and sent them to Boston, and have one now with us and he shall go also when a convenient opportunity presents and he desires it.

Then, taking a large boat and a canoe, John, the family, and the farmhands fled "two or three miles up an eastern branch of the river that comes from a large pond" and in the evening sent down four hands to make discovery.

Approaching the estate house in Jemseg, the workers could see nothing amiss. So they went towards it without suspicion and enjoyed the novelty of entering the house and sitting around the drawing-room with their feet up on footstools as if they owned it. They were talking and laughing uproariously when Claude, glancing out of the window, caught a glimpse of uniforms. "The English!" he yelled. "We are surrounded!"

In a pell-mell scramble the four dashed out into the autumn darkness. Claude was promptly seized; the other three, ducking and dodging, were lucky enough to dart through the ring of soldiers and make good their escape.

"They came to us," John Gyles wrote, "and gave a startling account of affairs. 'Again Madame said to me: 'Little English, now you can go from us, but I hope you will remember your word.'"

\* Grand Lake.

She was, John knew, trying to look at the situation selflessly. She was seeing it through his eyes, yet at the same time hoping against hope he would stay by her side.

He replied, "Madame, be not concerned, for I will not leave you in this strait."

"I know not what to do," she said, "with my two poor little babes."

John pointed to the far-stretching horizon. "Madame, the sooner we embark and go over the great pond the better."

So by boat and canoe the fugitive family crossed the lake. The waters were rough, but the peril of capsizing seemed infinitesimal compared with being overtaken by the English.

Meanwhile, the English expedition was steadily nearing Fort Nachouac.

Reverish preparations were afoot there. De Villebon, already knew that in skirmishes in the woods and on the shore at the mouth of the river, in the deadly game of hide and seek, ambush and counter-ambush, his ensign Chevalier had been killed, and several Frenchmen and Indians taken prisoner by the English. Now de Villebon sent one of his brothers, Neuville, down the river to continue the reconnaissance.

At the fort, the one hundred soldiers were desperately bulwarking the entrenchments and moving more guns into position, while French settlers were streaming into the stronghold both for safety and to bolster the garrison.

Father Simon came, leading thirty-six braves from Meductic. He offered to remain for the assault since the regular chaplain, Father Elizee, was away on leave.

De Villebon's palisaded fort was about one hundred and twenty-five feet square, with four bastions and eight cannon mounted in them. The defenders' musket fire dominated every possible avenue of attack. De Villebon ordered the generale to be beat. Standing out before the garrison drawn up under arms, he exhorted the troops to uphold the honour of France. He assured them the King would be happy to give care for all time to any who might be wounded in the battle about to break.

The garrison slept with arms within reach. From the barking

of their dogs, they knew the English must be within hailing distance.

Shortly after eight o'clock on the morning of October 18th, while Father Simon was dutifully celebrating mass, war or no war, the alarm was sounded.

Three English shallops, in line, were bearing into view around the point below. The fort's cannons opened up and their fire forced the ships back below the point, where their troops disembarked.

Across miles of forest the dull roar of the guns growled to Madame de Chauffours and her children and John Gyles, huddled in a makeshift shelter on the far beach of Grand Lake.

On the east bank of the cramped Nashwaak the English hurriedly shovelled up an earthenwork, where they mounted two field guns and commenced fire on the fort across the river. The third and biggest cannon, closer to the target, proved to be in such an exposed spot it was difficult to use.

Up fluttered the English flag. The hurrahs of the attackers clashed in mid-stream with the cheers of the defenders.

Against the deep-throated voices of the field pieces, the staccato rattle of musket fire rang out sharply as de Villebon's Malisects answered the shots of Church's Mohawks. The Indian forces were hiding in the river-bank shrubbery on opposite sides.

The weather grew very cold as night fell. The English lit fires—excellent marks for grape shot from French cannon.

So the fires had to be doused. The attackers were compelled to endure the climate. It was particularly hard on Major Church's militiamen, who had undergone a strenuous tour of duty; many wore thin and frayed uniforms.

The next day a similar indecisive pattern developed. The English were disheartened by the fact that the French gunner, La Cote, taking precise aim from his better-mounted position, dismantled one of their cannon and put another out of commission.

The only question now was whether the English force could withdraw without being mortally wounded. They ignited scattered camp-fires that night to draw the fort's cannon fire; and while the French gunners were bombarding the unattended blazes, they embarked downstream.

Defiantly the English took their time, burning and destroying farms as they went. As the four vessels sailed down toward Menagoueché, they razed the house and barns of Mathieu d'Amours, Sieur de Freneuse, and scorched his fields.

De Villebon had repelled the English, killed five officers and eight soldiers, and wounded twelve. He had suffered only one man killed and two wounded. But in addition he had lost several slain or captured at the mouth of the river, and his deputy Captain Villieu and twenty men had been seized at Passamaquoddy. The loss in property had been heart-rending.

None was a heavier loser than Monsieur's brother the Sieur de Freneuse, whose estate was demolished by the English, and who himself shortly succumbed to exposure suffered during the defence of the fort.

On the shore of the lake, John Gyles and the Sieur de Chauffours' family waited for the sounds of battle to die. Then:

"Hearing no report of the great guns for several days," he related, "I with two others went down to our house to make discovery."

It is easy to picture the trepidation with which they neared the d'Amours estate to view the charred embers.

To their amazement, there on the jetty stood Claude—alive and irritably hungry. The invaders, it seemed, had taken him along to Fort Nachouac and, on the return voyage, put him ashore at the same spot.

But what really astounded them was the estate itself—the house and farm buildings intact, gleaming, untouched, just as if no destructive vandals had come up the river.

John Gyles wrote how Madame de Chauffours heard the tidings:

She acknowledged the many favours which the English had shewn with gratitude, and treated me with great civility. The general had shown himself so honourable that, on reading the note on our door, he ordered it not to be burnt, nor the barn. Our cattle and other things he preserved, except one or two, and the poultry for use.

<sup>1</sup> Back to Boston with Major Church's force sailed one unusual passenger, a former resident of Marblehead, who had been a captured slave of the French. Though he probably did not realize it, he had been the first Negro to live in New Brunswick.

Officers came by boat from Fort Nachouac to remark at the seeming miracle and shake their heads. From Chignecto to Nachouac the French homesteads were a trail of ruins—all but this one valuable property apparently succoured by a scrap of paper.

"It is not like Church," commented one officer. "He is a demon: he has shown quarter to no one at Chignecto, Minas or Passamaquoddy—he likes nothing better than to burn, kill, smash the dykes which our settlers have so industriously built to reclaim the soil from the sea. Destruction is his career and his pastime."

"Without question," said another seriously, "he was overruled by Colonel Hawthorne."

"It was neither officer," broke in Madame, bringing steaming cups from the kitchen. "It was the eloquent plea composed by Little English, with my help."

Early next spring, on the wave-crest momentum of the Penamiquid victory, the French stepped up their attacks. All English towns in Newfoundland were ravaged. Maine settlements were savagely laid waste. Boston braced for invasion, knowing the French were charting an advance all the way to Virginia.

The same spring saw the Sieur de Chauffours return to Menagoueche. He was happy to be home, happy to announce he had confirmed his status as a seigneur on the St. John River, and happiest of all that the trust he placed in the slave had been justified. He thanked John profusely and assured him he would endeavour to fulfil Madame's promise. But he did nothing about discussing with John the plans for his liberation and return to New England.

Twice, working beside his master at the fish snares, John attempted to bring up the question of his future. Each time de Chauffours headed it off by pretending to find an emergency that required their attention. John Gyles became embittered.

The French were utterly selfish, he told himself. They cynically employed promises as an instrument to exact more work, more loyalty. In their foreign minds he was a slave, a chattel, to be bought and used and exploited and then one day, worn out and decrepit, to be discarded as thoughtlessly as his old Indian blanket. Until, one evening, just outside the drawing-room, he chanced to overhear a conversation.

"You must face up to it," Madame de Chauffours was saying. "It is not fair to prolong the decision, to postpone the break that has to come. Besides, this is a rarely propitious time—now, sudden-

ly, there is peace between England and France; we both know it cannot last."

"I have been to him as a father, which he does not have," de Chauffours replied. "He has spent half his life on this river. Why then should you imagine he will wish to go back to a home he can scarce remember? I pledge you this—I will offer to bring him up as my own son. He will appreciate the great advantages; mark my words, he will remain with us."

"No," Her voice was firm. "I know him. He is still the obdurate Puritan. He will go back. So, I say, well and good—speed him on his way—do not drag out the pain for all of us."

John felt the bitterness leave him. Silently he passed the open door, went to his bed chamber to lie awake and think.

In the morning de Chauffours, with both discomfiture and obvious emotion, made his plea.

"A sloop is due shortly at the mouth of the river with ransom for Michael Coombes, a prisoner," he told John. "Now, you are free to go home on this vessel; or, if you choose to stay I will gladly take you for my own son. Madame and I are extremely desirous that you stay..."

"I thank you earnestly for your great kindness," John Gyles said, "but I choose rather to go to Boston, hoping to find some of my relations yet alive."

His master sighed.

"I respect your answer," he finally said. "But first I wish you to come to Nachquac with me and take your leave of the governor who wishes to meet you."

It was a strange scene; two days later at the fort: De Villebon, grasping the hand of an English slave to wish him well!

"I have heard of you," he said, "the captive who saved Jemseg. Would that our side only had a few more young men like you—we might not now be mourning the calamity that befell our lands."

"At least," John replied, "I will take home an understanding of the French and also the Indians. It will be enlightening and useful."

"I sincerely trust so," said de Villebon. "But please accept my best counsel—if you must be English, do not live in New England, for shortly it will be a part of New France."

"I will remember your words," said John, smiling, and de

Villebon, catching the tone of voice, glanced at his face quickly.

When the time came, it was hard to say goodbye to Madame. She hurried in, thrust into John's hands a package of small cakes lest he had to wait overlong to embark, and kissed him tenderly on the forehead; then suddenly she was gone.

"Come," said de Chauffours in a quiet voice. "The ship is ready."

Neither spoke much on the voyage down to Menagouche; each, for his own reasons, felt sad. "Much has happened on this great stream in our century," de Chauffours said, "and each of us, in his own way, has played a part. I hope you will return."

"I intend to," John said. "I would like to go far up beyond Nachouac and see how the Indians fare at Meductic."

De Chauffours shrugged. "Remember only this: You will come back not as a French youth but as an Englishman. Take good care. I do not wish to have to take aim at you."

John replied, "Perhaps—just possibly—this time the peace will endure."

"I should like very much to believe that, but we both know the wars will go on as regularly as the rise and fall of the tides!" He mused, "the English should have retreated to Boston when Permaquid fell. But they have a senseless obstinacy much like the porcupine. Sometimes I think we could defeat the Englishmen—but I shiver to think of trying to defeat the Englishwomen, who are worse. All New England, I hear, is taking new heart from what happened at Haverhill."

John had no chance to ask what he meant. They were now running past the light limestone cliffs above the rapids, and a boatman was signalling them this was the time of tranquil waters between tides and they could pass safely through.

John's heart leaped as they rounded the bend in Menagouche lower harbour and saw a sloop flying the English flag.

So this, finally, was liberty!

He scrambled up the rope ladder and on to the deck, to be confronted by an erect, hard-visaged man in nautical clothes. De Chauffours climbed up behind him.

"Captain Starkee," the man identified himself in a brusque Scottish accent. "The younger one would be the captive, I surmise."

"Yes," exclaimed John, "I am he—and I cannot tell you how happy I am to be aboard! This is my master, the Sieur de Chauffours."

Captain Starkee gave him a look that made it easy to see what he thought of foreigners who would enslave Englishmen.

"Ask him," de-Chauffours said, "whether you must pay for your passage. If so, I would prefer to pay it myself rather than have you charged for it in Boston."

John translated the query.

"Tell the Frenchman," said Captain Starkee, "that as far as I am concerned there is nothing to pay—and if the owner should make any demand, I shall pay it myself, rather than a poor prisoner should suffer, for I am glad to see any English person come out of captivity."

They were to sail on the morning tide. De Chauffours shook hands with John Gyles, bade him goodbye and good fortune, and left abruptly. John found it hard to believe that de-Chauffours, though willing to pay his passage, would not have given him some small sum of money to help him on his way. He would arrive penniless in Boston where he might find no friends, no family. But at least, he thought, he was free.

Leaning on the ship's rail above the light-flecked June waters of the harbour, John stared out at the great river on which many Frenchmen and Indians, and some Englishmen too, had lived and met their deaths. Up the harbour he could see, luminous in the soft moonlight, the crumbling remains of a site where, uniquely, Frenchmen fought Frenchmen for control of this rich land and its profitable fur trade. It was here, in 1631 that Charles de La Tour

Charnisay with a large force besieged Menagouche, but the La Tours slipped away to the thirteen-year-old village of Boston—throwing it into momentary panic at the appearance of a French vessel—and brought back four hired English ships to smash the blockade.

Two winters later, while de La Tour was visiting Boston, Charnisay again attacked, but his beautiful ex-actress wife Françoise Marie put up such a fierce defence that the invader's ship was nearly sunk, twenty of his men killed and thirteen wounded. Only two months afterward the determined foe hurled still another assault at the fort, surreptitiously gained entry by bribing a Swiss guard, and hanged all the garrison except the volunteer executioner. Madame de La Tour, forced to watch the executions with a rope around her own neck, died within three weeks—of a broken heart, popular legend had it, though de-Chauffours privately thought it was aggravated spite and hysteria, as she had once been a temperamental favourite of the Paris stage.

had built his fort, only to be challenged by d'Aulnay de Charnisay from Port Royal across the Bay of Fundy.

"Mister Gyles!"

"Yes, master!" John spun about to face Captain Starkee.

"Not master," said the captain impatiently. "Have done, pray, with subservient talk. True, I am the master of this ship—but have the good sense to call me captain. Will you take a bowl of beef broth before turning in?"

"Thank you, Captain!—that is most thoughtful of you."

Mister Gyles. The words rang in his ears as he followed the captain. No longer a slave boy! No more would any be addressed by him as "master." He was free. He was Mister John Gyles, gentleman.

It was a strange awakening next morning.

Timbers were creaking, hoarse voices were shouting, the hammock was swaying, the loud protesting clank of an anchor chain sounded in his ears.

John Gyles wondered for an instant where he was—and then in a flurry of arms and legs he was out of the hammock and up on deck.

In a stiff breeze that streamed his hair back, he was in time to see an island going by—Partridge Island, the fragment that Glooscap had knocked out of Big Beaver's dam; and on the other side, in the dimming distance, the red headland that historically helped guide French men-of-war into Menagouche.

The five-day voyage seemed interminably long—partly because he was so eager to see Boston, partly because he felt guilty that he was doing nothing to earn his keep. Ingrained in his nature was a conviction that if you did not work, you were useless—and if you were useless, the tribe would dispose of you.

"But save your energy," Captain Starkee advised him when he asked if he could help; "you may some day find a need for it."

Then the taciturn master remarked, "One thing provokes my wonder. If you had a grievous life at the hands of the savages, why in Creation did you bring a great bow and a bag full of arrows in your luggage? Are they trophies?"

John laughed. "I fashioned them myself, and they are excellent weapons for the hunt, as I have shown to my own satisfaction. Besides, amid all the sorrows I have some happy recollections. But

there is something that provokes my curiosity greatly, sir. Are you aware of any event that occurred at Haverhill recently in which, perhaps, a force of English women routed the French?"

Captain Starkee's face relaxed into a smile.

"Not a force of women—just one woman. And it was not the Frenchmen, but a band of Indians."

And he recounted the story of Hannah Dustin, who was at home in bed with her week-old baby when an Indian war party swept down on the settlement and captured her with her nurse, Mary Neff.

Promptly solving the nuisance of a captive infant by slamming it against a rock, the savages marched the women with other prisoners through the forest to where their canoes were cached at the junction of the Merrimac and Contoocook streams.

By the time the Indians made camp on the small island there, all the captives but the two women had been hatcheted. The only other white person around the fire that night was a slave, Samuel Leonardson, who had been taken captive months before.

The rivers were roaring in furore, so husky Hannah Dustin had to speak loudly in the boy's ear when she made a request for information that evening, a request that startled him—where to hit with a tomahawk to kill quickly and surely.

In the early hours of the morning, the two women and the slave boy crept over the strongest sleeping warriors, and at a signal, the desperate hatchets flashed in the moonlight.

Again and again they wielded the tomahawks, killing twelve Indians—ten did not even awake. One old squaw, badly hacked, stumbled alive and screaming into the forest, followed by an Indian boy the attackers had spared.

Then the three flung away the bloody hatchets and ran for the shore, where they hurled rocks through every canoe hull but one. Just before they pushed off into the dark Merrimac, Hannah Dustin made them wait while she raced back, an Indian crooked-knife in hand—and minutes later tossed twelve mats of hair, the scalps of ten warriors and two squaws, into the canoe. Then she paddled the sixty miles back home to Haverhill.

The morning after Captain Starkee's sloop sailed into Boston harbour, John was up at daybreak, keen to get ashore; but while

he was still eating breakfast a crewman put his head in the cabin door. "There is a message-bearer here for you, and it must be of some import, for he has been instructed to deliver it to you personally."

Out on deck the messenger, a big well-dressed young fellow, was waiting.

"You are John Gyles, the former Indian captive?"

"I am—and I hope you bring me news of my family, for I have not seen them for so long I would not know any but my mother."

"She is dead," said the messenger quietly.

The first thought that flashed to John's mind was that she had got her wish—"I had rather follow you to your grave, or never see you more in this world, than you should be sold to a Jesuit."

"She has been gone for long?"

"Yes. She did not live many years after the savages released her, though she was unharmed."

"And my two sisters with her?"

"They were also freed; they are alive and well."

"But my brothers! There were three—James was slain. But was Thomas also? And the smallest boy?"

"Thomas is at his home on shore, and his wife is making ready a great banquet to welcome you back."

"His wife!" John gasped; still thinking of Thomas as a youth of sixteen. "But wait—the little fellow, Tad; is he—?"

The messenger, who stood eye to eye as tall as John, grinned. "I did not know how to tell you before—but I am 'the little fellow,' John."

John felt almost as if in a trance to realize how long he had been away and how time had not waited for him. He could only stand for some moments looking at Tad in disbelief, trying to associate this strapping youth with the scamping toddler of memory.

"Mister Gyles." It was Captain Starkee behind him, carrying most of his meagre belongings, including the Indian bow and bulging quiver, which made Tad in turn stare. "Do you flinch from setting foot amidst the hazards of civilization? This lad has a small boat waiting."

John took a deep breath to break the spell. He thanked Captain Starkee heartily for his kindness and promised to pay for his fare,

but the master gruffly rebuffed the idea and strode away to attend to disembarking the other prisoner, Michael Coombes.

Once ashore, John found himself disconcerted by the milling crowds; more than once he drew back against the wall of a house when a coach rumbled by with a great clattering of horses' hooves on the cobblestones. It was infinitely more frightening than looking on at a Maliseet war dance, and stepping back occasionally when a careless tomahawk-wielder gyrated by.

"Come!" Tad was laughing, tugging his reluctant sleeve. "You can study the curious denizens of Boston to your heart's content to-morrow. But first you have some relations to meet."

And so John, at a festive dinner, surrounded by merry family members, most of whom he recognized more readily than Tad, and by a sister-in-law, and two nephews he didn't even know he had, was initiated back into the life of a New England colonist. He penned in his journal.

On the 2nd of August, 1689, I was taken, and on the 19th of June, 1698, I arrived at Boston, so that I was absent eight years, ten months and seventeen days. In all which time, though I underwent extreme difficulties, yet I saw much of God's goodness. And may the most powerful and beneficent Being accept of this public testimony of it, and bless my experiences to excite others to confide in his all-sufficiency, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ.

The one-time slave held no grudge, bore no ill-feeling toward any race—English, French or Indian.

## JOHN GYLES, COMMANDER ON ST. GEORGE'S RIVER

Not until he had been ashore a few days, not until he had recovered from the novelty of it all, did John Gyles begin to consider his future. It worried him. He had no talent whatsoever. He had missed nearly nine years of schooling. What trade could he follow? Of what use would he be to anyone?

But although he did not realize it, he possessed something unique in New England: he could speak English and French, Maliseet and Micmac, while the Maliseet tongue enabled him to speak with closely-akin tribes also, like the Penobscots and Passamaquoddies.

Moreover he understood the thinking of both the French and the Indians. He could negotiate with the French without tramping on their sensitivities, and he knew how the Indians reasoned, what they respected, what they resented. He could deal with them as Indian to Indian.

If John did not realize this, the government certainly did, and he soon found himself engaged to accompany old Father Michel of Malden on a trading voyage up the Maine coastline.

On their return, Lieutenant-Governor Stoughton sent for him. "You have possibly heard of Major Converse, the notable defender of Wells," he said. "I wish you to go with him and Captain Alden to Penobscot to bargain for the exchange of captives. You will be paid as interpreter at three pounds a month—so mark that you barter well!"

John assured him he would get full value for his investment. The results so pleased the governor that he promptly summoned John again.

"The Indian chief Bommazeen and other savages accused of

violating their pact with the English are being held in our gaols," he said. "You are to interpret discussions with them for us—and then accompany Colonel Phillips and Captain Southack to Casco Bay to exchange them for English captives."

Thus began, almost overnight, a career that was to take John Gyles repeatedly back among the Indians and French, in war and peace.

Foresightedly he did not neglect his education. When he sailed back to Boston aboard the province galley in December, bringing English captives home, his interpreting was over till spring. "I pleaded to be kept in pay that I might have wherewith to support myself at school," he wrote later. "I went into the country, to Rowley, where boarding was cheap, to practise what little I had attained at school."

The following March he was back on duty, accompanying Colonel Phillips and Major Converse on a large brigantine up the Kennebec River for captives; then with Lord Bellemont on a galley up the eastern coast. Then more winter schooling; and two years later, in August of 1700, now twenty years old, John Gyles was given a lieutenant's commission and posted to the new fort at Casco Bay—although some of his gratification evaporated when he read Governor Dudley's written memorandum on the back of the commission: "No further pay but as interpreter, at three pounds per month."

For the first three years of his military career an uneasy quiet reigned around the Casco Bay garrison. Then, on August 10, 1703, an anomalous situation arose—one which Lieut. John Gyles had long fatalistically anticipated. The Peace of Ryswick was withering; Queen Anne's War was boiling up. Saco, Scarborough, Wells—the carnage was rampant again. Now his own fort was being besieged by Indians—some undoubtedly his erstwhile personal acquaintances.

It was an eerie atmosphere for the one-time slave. But unlike the other officers, John Gyles could very clearly visualize the attackers skulking in the dark shrubbery. He was most anxious to know which French officer was counselling the savages.

"It is Lieut. Thoreau," an Indian scout informed him.

"Then," said John Gyles to his commander, Major March, "Let us relieve our vigil and get some rest. Lieut. Thoreau is like an

Indian—he never attacks until just as dawn breaks."

He prophesied accurately, and the dawn assault was met not by spasmodic fire but by a devastating salvo.

"How many warriors has he lost?" John inquired after the second wave had been repulsed.

"Sixteen, thus far, by our count, though all may not be dead."

"Then he will not attempt another; he will wait us out, knowing our provisions are low. Let us repair our defences and trust that the province galley will come soon."

It arrived on August 16 while the Indians were patiently waiting for the garrison to starve. As the galley, under Captain Southack, entered the bay the savages faded away into the forests as silently as they came.

Lieut. John Gyles' reputation grew. The legend sprang up that he was part French, part Indian, that he kept a powerful bow in the foot to use with deadly aim whenever strategy demanded that a front-crawling attacker—perhaps a torch-bearing Indian—be despatched silently.

He was an invaluable asset to the English and Governor Dudley never let him remain idle for long. He was ordered to accompany the fabled Colonel Church himself on an expedition around the Bay of Fundy. It was a strange tour—so exciting in anticipation, so tepid in realization. Despite the fact he had five hundred and fifty men and a fair-sized fleet, Church did not attack Port Royal, but contented himself with pillaging and burning helpless Acadian settlements at Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Minas, Chignecto.

Could Church really be a coward, after all? Some critics angrily claimed so afterward—but John Gyles, knowing his record, did not credit it for an instant. He felt that Church believed in hitting the enemy where it hurt most.

Yet Church was not considered for the next assault on Port Royal, in 1707. The command went to Colonel March, who with more than a thousand men bumped his head against a solid wall: The tough new French Governor de Subercase showed such remarkable initiative in defence that nearly ten per cent of the attackers fell in a week and a half.

New England clamoured for a renewed assault. This was mounted in the fall of the same year, under Colonel Wainwright. It met the same result for the same reason: Governor Subercase,

unlike many of his predecessors and successors who suffered from fortress mentality, believed in the maxim: "Never let the enemy get a toehold, attack, attack, and attack again."

Then Governor Dudley promoted John Gyles to captain and ordered Colonel Saltonstall to deliver fifty effective men to him for a march. That year, as year after year, Captain Gyles proceeded to Port Royal with a flag of truce to exchange prisoners. Usually he was lucky enough—and in argument skillful enough—to transport all of them home.

In August 1709, he effected a considerable coup. Now officially he was a British officer, for England and Scotland had united in 1707. He was sent by His Excellency aboard the sloop *Hannah and Ruth* (Thomas Waters, Master) with nine French prisoners to barter at Port Royal.

These he ordered me to deliver to Governor Subercase and to let him know that he (Colonel Dudley) expected him to deliver all the English prisoners within his power, within six days, which I was ordered to demand and insist on, agreeably to his promise last year.

I was ordered to observe to him that Governor Dudley highly resented his breach of promise in not sending them early this spring, according to his parole of honour, by myself, when we had returned to him upwards of forty of his people, and had made provision for bringing home ours; and to make particular inquiry after Captain Myles, and to demand his and his company's release also.

Accordingly, arriving at Port Royal, I was kindly entertained by Governor Subercase; brought off more than one hundred prisoners. Soon after my return our forces were dismissed, and I received no other consideration for my services than pay as captain of my company.

This was a chronic irritant to John Gyles. Perhaps through having lived so long among the French, who were more volatile than the English, he could not easily accustom himself to the methodically undermotive English service, where you could achieve an outstanding success one day and be jettisoned the next without thanks because your abilities were no longer needed.

He knew, of course, that as inevitably as night followed day he

would be called back into uniform; but living was a hardship between times, though he welcomed the chance to continue his schooling.

And he knew—as Governor Subercase knew, too—the powerful New England colonies, twice stung, would not now rest until they had subdued Port Royal.

The next blow came in 1710 when Colonel Francis Nicholson led thirty-seven ships and more than three thousand men to the scene of the previous reverses. Outnumbered by more than ten to one, the defenders—some of them mere farmers, some incorrigible sons sent out to the New World by Paris families, all of them poorly equipped, and scantily provisioned—nevertheless held out for a desperate bloody week before surrendering.

Thus Port Royal<sup>1</sup> passed into British hands.

John Gyles yearned for peace to persist long enough for him to make a leisurely voyage to Menagouche and up the St. John stream—despite the lengthening lapse of years, he was anxious to know how Mal-dec was, whether Sieur and Madame de Chauffours still remembered him, and O-ski-tchin and Father Simon—there were so many gaps to fill in.

All he had found out, in these eleven years since his liberation from slavery, was that O-ski-tchin was still alive—at Port Royal one day he had caught a glimpse of the unmistakable tall figure of his old master in the distance.

He was never to find out what happened to his erstwhile French owners. When de Villebon died in 1700, the new Governor of Acadia re-established headquarters at Port Royal, and left the handful of St. John River settlers exposed to English attack. They had no choice but to give up their laboriously hewn homes and move to the Nova Scotia peninsula. Thus after nearly a century the river valley reverted to its original state: it was Indian territory again.

To the Sieur and Madame de Chauffours this was a shattering blow. They could sell nothing, no one wanted their estate and they had only the possessions they could carry with them. It proved too much for gentle Marguerite de Chauffours. Exhausted and ailing, still a young woman, she died within a few months after arriving in Port Royal.

<sup>1</sup> Now Annapolis Royal.

Almost immediately the fate she had long dreaded for her husband became a reality: He was captured by the English; for the next two years, while John Gyles lived a privileged life at Casco, the Sieur de Chauffours languished a prisoner in a Boston jail. When finally he returned to Port Royal broken in health, he found more adversity. His children were being looked after by his wife's sister Louise, widow of his brother the Sieur de Freneuse—but she had become involved in a notorious scandal with the naval commandant, Captain St. Pierre Bonaventure, whose family was in France. A baby was born to Louise; Bonaventure vehemently denied any implication.

Distraught Governor Brouillain already had his hands full. He was saddled with the problem of trying to keep the republican-minded Nova Scotia Acadians in line. Like the Boston English colonists, they chafed under what they regarded as unfair directives from across the sea. They wanted to trade openly with the New Englanders who undersold the French companies and offered higher prices for furs. Now this woman, Louise de Freneuse, was almost the last straw to the governor.

Hopefully he tried to send Louise back to the St. John River but she retorted "I cannot possibly live there—it is deserted except by the savages." As the next best recourse he sent her to live several miles from Port Royal.

No one disputed Louise's courage, determination and ability. In frigid winter she once crossed the violent Bay of Fundy in a birch canoe with only her son and an Indian as companions. But she was too controversial a figure to be allowed to stay. The French government in 1708 ordered her back to Québec. Later, typically, after the English captured Port Royal, she helped from Québec to advise a French attempt to regain it.

In the same year of 1708, the Sieur de Chauffours died in his fifties. He lived to see his daughter Charlotte become, in 1707, the Baroiness-de-St. Castin, wife of the young military leader Anselm de-St. Castin, who two months before had been shot in the thigh during the defence of Port Royal.

The story of Acadia took a peculiar twist in 1713. The territory was awarded to the British by the Treaty of Utrecht; but the French afterward insisted Acadia meant only the Nova Scotia

peninsula, and encouraged their settlers in that area to leave for the New Brunswick mainland. There, and at the fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island, they were to keep a foothold for nearly half a century more.

In August, 1715, John Gyles was given an important new responsibility. Now a seasoned veteran of the wars a mature officer of thirty-five upon whose competence and uncanny instinct about the enemy successive governments relied,

I was desired, and had great promises made me by the proprietors, and received orders from His Excellency to build a fort at Pejepscot.<sup>1</sup> Soon after our arrival there the Indians came in the night, and forbade our laying one stone upon another.

I told them I came with orders from Governor Dudley to build a fort, and if they disliked it, they might acquaint him with it; and that if they came forcibly upon us, they or I should fall on the spot.

After such like hot words they left us, and we went on with our building, and finished it November 25, 1715, and our carpenters and masons left us.

My wages were very small, yet the gentlemen proprietors ordered me only five pounds for my good services, etc.

Trouble was sure to develop in the months and years ahead, John Gyles realized—the only question was when.

By his orders, the friendly Indians in the pay of the fort were ordered to report immediately not only the approach of war parties but also any unusual appearance of strange Indians in the vicinity on apparently peaceful intent.

John was at dinner in his apartment one evening in 1719 when Lieutenant Brooke knocked urgently on the door.

"Sir, you should be aware of this," said the officer. "A strange Indian is at the gate requesting audience with you and will talk with no one else. He insists his message is personal, for your ears alone. But may I suggest, sir: He is a very formidable-looking fellow capable of serious harm, and I fear this may be a diabolical French ruse. So let us take him for questioning, or at least send him on his way."

<sup>1</sup> Fort George, Brunswick, Maine.

"Stay!" said John, rising from the table. "Many a garrison has been slaughtered because a savage went unheard. Show this stranger in—I would hear his story."

"Then may I stand by and keep my pistol at the ready?"

"Certainly. It were folly to do otherwise, for I cannot present my musket to every visitor."

A few moments later the door opened—and in strode a tall Indian, straight and dignified of mien, followed a step behind by an anxious Lieutenant Brooke with pistol in hand.

"O-ski-tchin!" cried John Gyles—and the white man and the red brave rushed to embrace each other, both laughing and trying to talk at the same time.

Alarmed, Lieutenant Brooke dashed around them frantically, trying to level his pistol at the Indian.

"Go away, in heaven's name," John Gyles ordered, swivelling himself about to block any possible shot.

"But—but, sir—"

"Desist, I beg of you. If you must do something, kindly ask the sergeant to bring in another dinner for our guest. And then, pray, let us be. We have much to talk about."

With a backward glance Lieutenant Brooke darted for the kitchen.

John was amazed at how little O-ski-tchin had changed since they last met face to face twenty-four years ago. His old Maliseet master had no grey in his hair, though he must be nearing sixty. He was still the muscular warrior—a bulwark of constancy in a sea of bewildering change.

"Tell me," said John in Maliseet, seating the obviously pleased Indian at the table and pouring him a glass of brandy, "how is the little girl Mal-lee? Is she married now and raising a great family of braves?"

O-ski-tchin stared at the table.

"I am sorry," John said, smiling. "This reunion is as overwhelming to you as to me. Let me ask first questions first. Why are you at Fort George? Surely you are not spying on my small outpost?"

"No, Chon," said O-ski-tchin, smiling at the very thought. "I could not betray my own blood."

John was moved by the compliment; in all his six years with the

Maliseets his Indian master had never indicated he thought so highly of him.

"Then why are you here today?"

"My squaw, as you know, is a Penobscot. We visit relatives."

"And how did you know where to find me?"

O-ski-tchin tossed up his hands, a gesture he had acquired from the French. "All Indians—and all French—know where you are all the time. You are a feared sagamore of the English now."

"And Mal-lee?"—eagerly—"Tell me about Mal-lee! Is she still pretty?"

"I am sorry, Chon. She did not see sixteen summers. The pestilence took her soon after you left."

"Oh?" John tried to hide the disappointment—but it was hard to, for her gentle voice and her laughter had echoed in his thoughts for a quarter of a century. "And good Father Simon?"

"Dead, too." Then he brightened. "But Chon—we now have a wonderful chapel, built by the French only two years ago. You can hear the bell pealing all through the forest."

John was much more interested in the people.

"The de Chauffours of Jemseg!" he exclaimed. "Are they happy and prosperous? Are the children now grown up and married?" O-ski-tchin shrugged again.

"I know nothing of them," he answered. "The St. John River was for many years only for the Indians; all the French vanished, Chon. Do not ask me why. Ask your own people—ask the English."

Captain John Gyles heard this with a twinge of regret, even though the withdrawal of the French from the great stream represented a victory for English pressure. He felt sorry for Madame de Chauffours, forced to start life anew. It meant that the estate house and buildings he had saved from destruction were now vacant, sagging into ruins. And he found himself suddenly wondering, inexplicably, what had become of his beautiful birchbark canoe, *Wa-pe-ki-ak-wi*; he always intended to go back some day and claim it.

There were so many things he always intended to do some day.

"You were such a fine marksman with your bow," O-ski-tchin was reminiscing. "Can you still aim an arrow straight and true?"

"Even as expertly as you taught me. I have two new bows, and my old one, and many arrows. They are part of our fort's armament."

O-ski-tchin looked at him quickly, to see if Chon were jesting. His former slave seemed serious.

"It is well, then," said the Malisset, grinning. "The white men taught us to use muskets against them; and the Indians taught you to use the bow against them." Then he added, thoughtfully, "You are a better brave than I am, Chon—for now I have not touched a bow for half my lifetime."

"I must come and visit you and the squaw at Meductic," John said.

"It is a promise?"

"You have my word."

John walked out with O-ski-tchin to the gate. The Indian seemed taken aback when the sentry sprang to attention and saluted and opened the gate for him. He paused, half-turned, and looking John up and down from hat to boots, touched him on the arm as if he could not quite believe it. On his usually immobile face there was an unaccustomed look of pride.

"I always wanted," said O-ski-tchin, smiling, "to bring up a warrior."

"A-ti-u, un-sa-kum-um" (Goodbye, my chief), John said.

And the Indian was gone into the night.

Not until three years later, in 1722—when another interval of peace had given way to Dummer's War—did the long-awaited attack befall Fort George. It was a dismal failure. For two hours the savages rattled musket fire at the bastion, killing one man. Then they drew off and consoled themselves with killing cattle.

Another flurry erupted three years later when Lieut. Governor Dummer ordered John Gyles to go on a ten days' march up the Amniscoggin River. In his absence the Indians attacked again, killing two men.

That same year Captain Woodside received a commission to Fort George—and John Gyles was now named commander of the garrison at St. George's River.<sup>1</sup>

But he was too valuable to the British cause to be left to his tasks. The following year Governor Dummer asked him to inter-

<sup>1</sup> Near Thomaston, Maine.

prêt for the Cape Sable Indians who had seized a Plymouth vessel at Newfoundland. These were Micmacs—and nobody in the colony but John Gyles knew their language. The job took several months. The Indians, found guilty of piracy, were all executed at Boston. His Honour presented Commander Gyles with ten pounds for his services, which he gratefully received.

By 1736 John Gyles, now fifty-six, had married, lost his first wife, and wed a second time. For the sake of his wife and children, and on the urging of many friends, he wrote a journal of his years of captivity and called it *Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, Etc. In the Captivity of John Gyles, Esq., Commander of the Garrison on Saint George River in the District of Maine, Written by Himself*. It was published in Boston in 1736. His foreword read:

These private memoirs were collected from my minutes, at the earnest request of my second consort, for the use of our family, that we might have a momento ever ready at hand to excite in ourselves gratitude and thankfulness to God; and in our offspring a due sense of their dependence on the Sovereign of the universe, from the precariousness and vicissitudes of all sublunary enjoyments. I have had the honour to serve this province under eight commanders-in-chief, governors, and lieutenant-governors, from the year 1698 to the year 1736; and how much longer my services may continue, I submit to the Governor of the world, who overrules every circumstance of life, which relates to our happiness and usefulness, as in infinite wisdom he sees meet.

In the years immediately following, epochal events burst upon Acadia—but the aging John Gyles was to have a diminishing role.

Undoubtedly the most fantastic was the New Englanders' wintertime attack on Fort Louisbourg, Cape Breton, in March of 1745—on paper a far more foolhardy attempt than the French-Indian assault on Pemaquid's Fort William Henry half a century before.

Hailed as "the Dunkirk of America," Louisbourg was a gargantuan bastion erected by the French during a quarter of a century at a cost of six and a half million pounds. In its great battlements were mounted two hundred and six cannon.

But to the New Englanders, this—if ever—seemed the moment to besiege the strategic stronghold that dominated the North Atlantic trading lanes. Word filtered down that the garrison of French, five hundred regulars, sullen and dispirited, their pay lagging, had muddled in December over suspicions they were being short-changed on rations. The fifteen hundred militiamen available to stand with them included many old men and boys. Stores were low. In any attack the garrison would be crowded by two thousand civilian refugees.

The call to arms was sounded in New England from town meeting and pulpit—and was answered by a spectacle to break the heart of any professional soldier: an untrained, shuffling assortment of brawny loggers and gangling farm boys, sawyers and fishermen, tosspots and divinity students, old Indian-fighters, a relatively few hands with military experience—all as excitedly confident as if they were going to the Crusades.

Behind the shrilling fifes and pounding drums straggled this hurriedly-mustered rag-tag green army of four thousand, two hundred and seventy men—the most in work clothes, shouldering a variety of muskets at all angles, one bayonet to ten men, no drill or discipline, sparsely equipped with cannon, the novice gun crews expecting to learn their duties in action. The foistering, hymn-singing, rum-swiggling aggregation was led by a merchant and lumberman of Kittery, Maine—William Pepperell, a militia colonel.

Perhaps never had an expedition embarked in the face of so many grave warnings from intelligent observers—among them Benjamin Franklin, who from Philadelphia penned this letter to his brother in Boston:

Fortified towns are hard nuts to crack, and your teeth are not accustomed to it. Taking strong places is a particular trade, which you have taken up without serving an apprenticeship to it. Armies and veterans need skillful engineers to direct them in their attack. Have you any? But some seem to think that forts are as easy taken as snuff.

But sail the motley expedition did, even without any assurance of British naval support—it sailed against mighty Louisbourg in ninety transports, mostly sloops, which could be blown out of the

water by one French ship-of-the-line. And it sailed smack into an Atlantic winter gale that hurled the ships around like sticks of driftwood.

Yet astonishingly, not a vessel was lost. Nor did any big French warship appear. Instead, providentially, Commodore Warren of the Royal Navy appeared with several warships from the Caribbean. Repeatedly, time and again, fate favoured the New Englanders.

The decisive moment came unexpectedly at the very outset of the siege. Because part of the ramparts of the Royal Battery had been dismantled for repairs, four hundred French troops spiked the guns and withdrew from it as soon as the New Englanders set outlying storehouses ablaze. The invaders quickly restored the guns, turned them on the town within the fort walls.

Then they performed herculean feats of man-hauling cannon through marshy wasteland to gain high ground to dominate the stronghold. Even so, the French resisted gallantly for forty-six costly days before capitulating.

Ironically, the New Englanders won their prize at a toll of only one hundred and thirty killed and three hundred wounded, so resourceful had been the leadership of Colonel Pepperell and his naval colleague, Commodore Warren; but in the next year nearly five hundred more provincial troops fell victim to disease in the dank, vermin-infested barracks of Louisbourg.

All New England was jubilant over the victory. After 1745, two huge fleets set sail from France to re-take Louisbourg—one to be defeated by storm and pestilence, the next by British naval power.

And then in 1748, to the rage and frustration of the New Englanders, the flick of a quill pen in far-away Europe scratched out their historic triumph. By the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, Louisbourg was given back to the French. Again, and sharper than ever, it was a thorn in their side.

Even as the capture of the invincible bastion had given a new fillip to the American colonists' military self-reliance, this latest act reinforced their distrust in overseas statesmen. "Betrayal!" was the cry in Boston.

Now the French tried frantically to settle and fortify their domain north of the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick and all the way down to Penobscot.

It was an illusory hope. True, the French population of Canada had increased fivefold since 1689—to sixty thousand, but so had the British colonial population of America—to one million, two hundred thousand. The scales were as heavily tipped as ever.

Halifax, still a naval headquarters today, began to take form swiftly in 1749 as an offset to Louisbourg.

With 1755 came the capture of Fort Beauséjour on the New Brunswick side of the Nova Scotia border by Col. Robert Moncton . . . and the exile of the Acadians to Louisiana and many other Atlantic seaboard places.

The victors could not but grudgingly respect the tenacity of the Acadians. Many of them fled to the woods and made their way to the upper stretches of the St. John River. One brigload of thirty-two Acadian families mutinied during an exercise paced on deck, overcame the British crew, and, led by Charles Belliveau, sailed back to Saint John and escaped up river. Another group, put ashore in South Carolina, trekked on foot all the way to Quebec via Pittsburgh, and thence homeward to the St. John River.

Inexorably the British pressed on with their mopping-up operation in Acadia. They were to take over the French fort at Saint John in 1758 as the garrison fled upstream. In the following year a small force of New England rangers from that fort was to add no lustre to British colonial annals by making a sortie up the St. John to the Acadian village of St. Anne's,<sup>1</sup> burning the homesteads, chasing the inhabitants into the forests to die of exposure, famine and disease. In particular their overtaking and killing of six Acadian men, women and children—whom they later scalped—was to prompt a spate of anguished letters from local commanders seeking to apologize to their superiors for the rangers' lapse into barbarity.

<sup>1</sup> Fredericton.

## I 8 AFTERMATH

In the mid-1750's, in his seventy-fourth year, John Gyles was living in retirement at Roxbury, Massachusetts. He had never fulfilled his cherished dream of returning to the Meductic he left more than half a century before. Sometimes now he shrank from the dream. Everything had changed so; his old friends were gone; perhaps even the Indians themselves were no longer there.

Life these days was pleasantly even-tempered, which well suited his sedate second spouse. But even in his old age John Gyles yearned to be where the activity was.

"I could serve very competently in the next war if they would ask me," he remarked from his leather armchair in the parlour one day, rapping his cane-tip on the floor to emphasize each word. "Give me a horse, or put me on a sloop, and I could get about as well as any of the inept young wretches they use as interpreters in our present absurd era."

His wife nodded quickly. "Indeed you could, dear." She had long ago learned it was the only thing to say.

Not the least doubt occurred to his mind that there would be another war. There always was.

"And we could most certainly use the money," he continued, warming to the prospect, "the way everything keeps going up these days. Why, I remember when the government paid forty pounds for an Indian scalp. Do you know what it is now?—one hundred pounds for an adult male scalp, fifty pounds for a female's or a puny child's. A captive alive is worth even more—five pounds above the corresponding scalp rate. Where will it all end?"

She nodded again. "Goodness only knows."

John Gyles was agog one spring afternoon when his wife arrived

home and announced she had brought a news-journal with tidings of the latest alarms—also a copy of the personal journal of William Pote of Falmouth. Captain Pote had been in command of the schooner Montague when the vessel was surprised and seized near Port Royal by the French and Indians in 1745. Via the St. John River he was taken to Québec, and remained there a prisoner for three years.

"Let us have the newest intelligence first," John said, comfortably stretching out his legs from the armchair to a footstool.

"It is most distressing," his wife cautioned. "King George's War just past—and now there is every sign of a new war. It states that the French having extended their sway in this century up from New Orleans and Mobile along the Mississippi, Arkansas, Ohio and Illinois streams, thus virtually creating another Acadia to the west of us, Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia ordered them out of the Ohio Valley as it is English."

"Good man!" quoth John Gyles. "Roust the interlopers out."

"He sent a young officer to warn the commandant of Fort LeBouef. When St. Pierre disdained the advice, the officer returned to Virginia and was despatched at the head of a regiment, accompanied by a South Carolina company. They surprised a force of French in the wilds, killed ten and captured twenty-one."

"An able leader. Does it give his name?"

"Yes—a Captain George Washington. Then, reinforced by New York troops, he marched for Fort Duquesne, but hearing that the French and Indians were approaching in great strength, Washington fell back to defend a stockade he had built at Great Meadows—Fort Necessity."

"The fool!" John Gyles jumped up out of his chair, leaning heavily on his cane. "Does he not know that a stockade is just a bunch of sticks? He should have vanished away!"

"His wife placidly read on, ignoring the outburst."

"Within a day his four hundred men found themselves besieged by fifteen hundred Indians and French. During the nine-hour attack the English killed two hundred."

"Good marksmanship."

\* Waterford, Pa.

"Captain Washington capitulated, and marched his men safely back to Virginia."

"Sheer folly!" winced the old soldier. "He might have been butchered to the last man. Let us pray he will learn something from experience."

Although John Gyles could not know it, the drumfire of the muskets at Fort Necessity was to echo throughout the Western world. The spreading conflagration was to engulf not only New England and Canada but also, two years later, all of Europe itself.

Nor could he know that the surrender of Fort Necessity was to be Washington's first and last—nor that the French and Indian War now being touched off was to be the climactic final chapter of this near century of strife in the New World.

Under General Jeffrey Amherst fourteen thousand troops, largely British, were to assail Fort Louisbourg the second time in 1758, backed by an equal number of sailors in the flotilla of Admiral Edward Boscawen, known as "Old Dreadnaught" or "Wry-necked Dick."

After the first few tense minutes—after dashing Brigadier James Wolfe had seized a fleeting advantage to rush some men ashore under fortuitous rocky cover—the investment soon became a systematic, awesomely thorough British procedure of reducing a fortress by deadly ear-splitting bombardment.

Yet the outnumbered French garrison of five thousand fought as the ramparts toppled about them, mainly through sheer courage, partly through fear of retribution because just the year before Pemaquid's Fort William Henry had fallen once again, and its defenders had been massacred by rum-maddened savages.

Not for nearly two long months did the battered Louisbourg garrison surrender, giving Quebec a winter's respite from the British drive.

But inevitably Quebec also was to succumb, and Montreal. In 1760 the final naval battle of the war was to be fought in the Restigouche River, with an English fleet destroying the French ships in a seventeen-day struggle; and at last, in 1763, would come the Peace of Paris, and New France would be ceded to the British.

Now Mrs. Gyles turned to the reading of Captain Pote's journal of

his experiences as a captive of the Indians, which her husband had been anticipating with obvious relish.\*

"Saturday ye 6th. This Day In ye Morning our Indians had much Difficulty, to prevail with ye Spaniard to Sell ym his Connew. This Day we passed by several french houses and some we stopped at for provisions; but they was exceeding poor and Could not supply us with any, this Night we arrived to an Indian Village, called apogé,<sup>1</sup> where we found ye Schooner Montague was arrived with ye other prisoners. Some Days before us. At this place ye Squaws came down to ye Edge of ye River, Dancing and Behaving themselves in ye most Brutish and Indecent manner; yt is possible for human kind, and taking us prisoners by ye arms, one Squaw on Each Side of a prisoner, they Led us up to their Village and placed themselves in a Large Circle Round us, after they had Gat all prepared for their Dance, they made us set down In a Small Circle about eighteen Inches assunder and began their frolick, Dancing Round us and Striking of us in ye face with English Scalps, yt caused ye Blood to Issue from our mouths and noses In a Very Great and plentiful manner, and Tangled their hands in our hair, and knocked our heads together with all their strength and Vehemence, and when they was tired of this Exercise, they would take us by hair and some by ye ears, and standing behind us, oblige us to keep our necks strong so as to bear their weight, then raise themselves their feet off ye ground and their weight hanging by our hair and ears.

"In this manner, they thumped us in ye back and sides with their knees and feet, and Twitched our hair and Ears to such a Degree, that I am Incapable to Express it, and ye others that was Dancing Round if they saw any man falter, and did not hold up his Neck, they Dashed ye Scalps In our faces with such Violence, yt every man endeavoured to bear them hanging by their hair in this manner, rather than to have a Double Punishment; after they had finished their frolick, that lasted about two hours and a half, we was carried to one of their Camps, where we Saw Some of ye Prisoners that Came in ye Monta-

\* Quoted here in the original spelling and capitalization.

<sup>1</sup> Aukpaque ("Head of Tide"), six miles above Nachouac.

gue; at this place we Incamped that Night with hungry Belleys.

Mrs. Gyles stopped.

"This is detestable, John, You surely do not want to hear more."  
"I certainly do." He shuffled his feet to a more relaxed position on the footstool. "I want to hear what happened when they got to Meductic, and read it slowly."

As the party drew nigh to Meductic, she related, the Indians told their protesting prisoners to stay close to them and they would not be hurt. Then—

"We arrived to ye Indian village about Noon: As soon as Squaws saw us coming in sight of their village, and heard ye Cohoops, which Signified ye Number of Prisoners, all ye Squaws in the Village, prepared themselves with Large Rods of Briars and Nettles &c., and met us at their Landing, Singing and Dancing and Yelling, and making such a hellish Noise that I expected we should meet with a worse Reception at this place than we had at ye other. I was Verrey Carefull to observe my masters Instructions that he had Given me ye Day before, and warned ye Rest to do Likewise, . . ."

She looked up. "One Mohawk did not, and:

"Ye Squaws Gathered Round him, and Caught him by ye hair, as many as could get hold of him, and halled him down to ye Ground, and pound his head against ye Ground, ye Rest with Rods dancing Round him, and wipted him over ye head and Legs to Such a degree, that I thought they would have killed him In ye Spot, or halled him in ye water and Drowned him. They was So Eager to have a Stroak at him, each of them, that they halled him Some one way and Some another, Some times Down towards ye watter by ye hair of ye head, as fast as they could Run, then ye other party would have ye Better and Run with him another way, my master spoke to ye other Indians, and told ym to take ye fellow of their hands, for he believed they would Certainly murder him, In a Verrey Short time."

Mrs. Gyles looked pale. "Is that not enough for one evening?"

You will have dreadful dreams."

"Not at all," replied her husband. "I want to know the rest of Meductic."

"Well," she continued, "it says the squaws came upon Pote but his master spoke sharply to them. Then they were taken to the wigwam of the chief of Meductic, whom they entreated to rescue the half-dead Mohawk from the toils of the squaws. This he did."

"Go on," said John.

"Thursday ye 11th. This Day we Remained in Ye Indian Village called Medocatike, I observed ye Squaws could not by any means Content themselves without having their Dance; they Continued Teasing my master to Such a Degree, to have ye Liberty to Dance Round me, that he Consented they might if they would Promise not to abuse me, they Desired none of ye Rest, but me was all they aimed at, for what Reason I cannot Tell. When my masters had Given them Liberty, which was Done in my absence, there Came into ye Camp two Large Strong Squaws, and as I was Setting by one of my masters, they Caught hold of my arms with all their Strength, and Said Something in Indian, that I supposed was to tell me to Come out of ye Camp, and halled me off my Seat. I Struggled with them and cleared my Self of their hold, and Set down by my masters; they Came upon me again Verrey Vigorously, and as I was Striving with them, my master ordered me to Go, and told me they would not hurt me. At this I was obliged to Surrender and Whent with them they Led me out of ye Camp, Dancing and Singing after their manner, and Carried me to one of their Camps where there was a Company of them Gathered for their frolick, they made me Set down on a Bears Skin in ye Middle of one of their Camps, and Gave me a pipe and Tobacoe, and Danced Round me till the Sweat Trickled Down their faces, Verrey plentifully, I seeing one Squaw dancing and foaming at ye mouth and Sweating to Such a degree that I could not forbear Smiling, which one of ye old Squaws Saw, and Gave me two or three twitches by ye hair, otherwise I Escaped without any Punishment from them."

"That is the end of Meductic?"

"Yes, except it says that one of the chiefs made Pote read out loud a treaty made fourteen years before by this tribe with the governor of Nova Scotia. And there was a Bonus Castin present, who questioned Pote and informed him his life was in dire peril."

She looked askance at her husband. He appeared almost happy. "You know," he said slowly, "the river has not changed as much as I thought. I really *must* go up next time peace returns."

Shaking her head, she went out to the kitchen to get him his bedtime biscuits and hot milk.



The Editor of the Saint John *Telegraph-Journal* and *Evening Times-Globe*, Stuart Trueman began his newspaper career at seventeen as a sports cartoonist. He has been a newspaperman for thirty-seven years.

Trueman was born and educated in Saint John, New Brunswick, and he has crossed Canada many times. He has also spent time in Barbados, Trinidad, and Tobago, and in Washington, in England, Scotland, and Germany. He is the author of the successful comic novel, *Cousin Elva*, published in 1955. Many of Trueman's humorous pieces were included in *Post Scripts*, and his articles have appeared in leading Canadian magazines.